

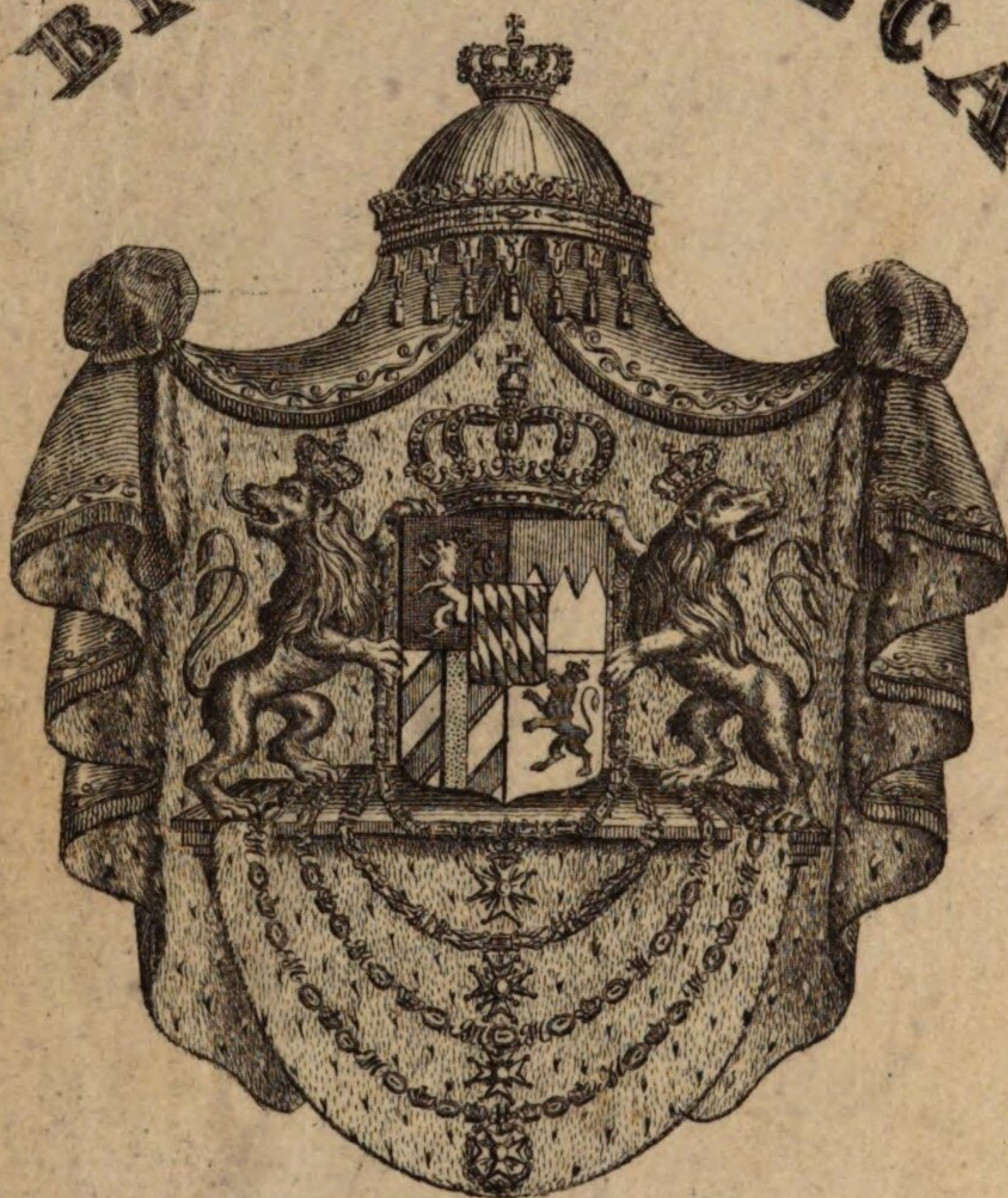


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THE DIVORCED.

BY LADY CHARLOTTE BURY.

"Nor tears that wash out sin, can wash out shame."

POPE.

TALES OF WOMAN'S TRIALS.

BY S. C. HALL.



PARIS:

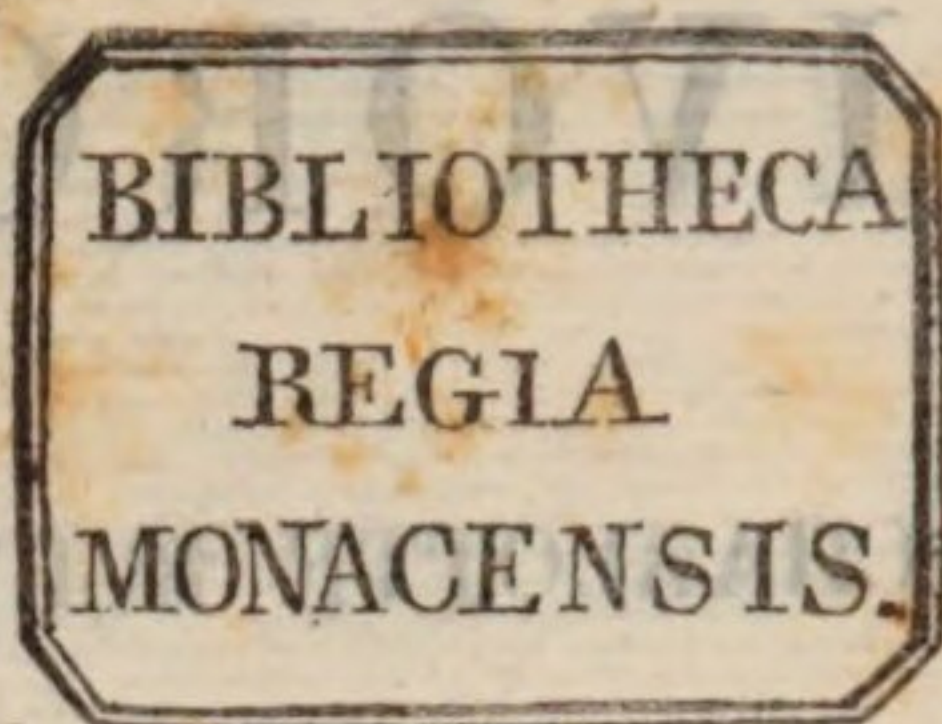
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1837.

254.D.



TALES OF WOMAN'S TRIALS.

BY S. C. HALL.



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ON THE CONTINENT.

1837.

PARAGRAPH IN THE MORNING POST, 8th MAY, 18—.

ESCLANDRE IN HIGH LIFE.

“IT is our painful task to announce the elopement of a beautiful and noble lady, the wife of the Marquis of V—n, with the Earl of H—d. This event has for a considerable time formed the subject of conversation and speculation in the higher circles; it is even reported that bets to a large amount have been won and lost, on the probable issue of the flirtation so long existing between this unfortunate victim of delusion, and the Earl of H—d. A duel took place yesterday morning, when the injured husband fired first, but the Earl of H—d would not return his adversary's fire, and the seconds interfering, the conclusion of this unfortunate affair rests for the decision of the Courts of Law.”

ALEXANDER IN HIGH LIFE.

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THE DIVORCED.

CHAPTER I.

"I loved, I love you, for this love have lost
State, station, heaven, mankind's, my own esteem,
And yet cannot regret what it hath cost
So dear is still the memory of that dream.
Yet if I name my guilt, 't is not to boast,
None can deem harsher of me than I deem.
I trace this scrawl because I cannot rest;
I've nothing to reproach or to request."—BYRON.

LADY HOWARD was sitting at a late breakfast, in the month of May, exactly that day sixteen years since the foregoing paragraph was read in the Morning Post.

A change had passed over her beauty since that early day of its first exceeding loveliness, but she was still a beautiful woman, and what she had lost in bloom she had gained in expression.

There was a sweetness and a melancholy in her smile which showed that sorrow had touched her nearly; a mingled humility and pride was visible in her whole demeanour; she was leaning on her hand thoughtfully, when her daughter came hastily into the room.

"So soon returned, Alice, love! why you have not had time to take your usual exercise. How came Miss Sharpe to allow you?"

"Oh, mamma!" (cried the child, interrupting her in extreme agitation).—"Oh! mamma, I am never to see Fanny again; I am never to speak to her—never to play with her in the square." And she put her head into her mother's lap, and sobbed loudly. "Fanny, Fanny!" she ejaculated in broken phrase, but never could finish what she seemed to wish to say, and Lady Howard's lap was wet with her child's tears.

"What is the matter Alice? you terrify me. What has happened to vex you? Have you and Fanny quarrelled? if so, take comfort; she will soon be friends with you again, if you go

like a good girl, and beg pardon, should you have offended her;—do not cry, Alice, do not cry so. Tell me love, what does so distress you?”

“Fanny—— and —— I have not quarrelled mamma; oh! no—but we are never to play together again. A nasty cross lady came and took Fanny away from beside me, on the bench, where we were sitting together, making daisy chains, and she said ‘Do you remember what I told you, Miss Fanny,’ then whispered in her ear, and led her away. I ran after them, and asked Fanny if she was to be in the square this evening; Fanny said nothing, but was ready to cry, and the cross lady answered ‘No, you are not to walk here to-night.’ And then she turned to me, asked where my governess was, and bade me go to her; and I heard her say as she walked away, ‘You must not play with that young lady and her brother, any more, Miss Fanny. Your mamma does not choose you should,’ and she took her out of the square; but I saw Fanny look back very sorrowful at me, and we kissed our hands to each other. I am so fond of Fanny, mamma. I love her so much, it is very hard that we may not play together again; and Henry too, is so fond of her. He will be very angry at the cross lady——but that will not bring us together again—and——and——I will never walk in the ugly square, now that I am not to meet Fanny—it is very hard—can you conceive what for, mamma?” and her tears flowed afresh; as she looked up through them to her mother’s face; it was covered with a blush of scarlet dye, and an expression of dismay and vexation was visible to the child, as she folded her in her arms, and tried, but in vain, to comfort her for the loss of her play-fellow and friend.

For a few moments, neither spoke, and Lady Alice continued to sob and weep, leaning on her mother’s breast, and causing her such anguish as none but those under the same awful, and pitiable circumstances can know.

The child’s tears were fire-brands to the mother’s heart.

“I wonder why Fanny is forbade to play with me,” resumed Lady Alice, with the tenacity of disappointed affection. “I wonder why Fanny’s mamma does not choose she should any longer be friends with my brother and me, Fanny always told me her mamma was a good mamma, and a kind one, as kind and as good as my own dear mamma; it is very odd, why we are to be parted,—can you conceive why?” and again Alice Talbot looked in Lady Howard’s face, but she could read no answer there; she only saw the same deepening blush, and heard the sigh that was almost a groan. Happy would it have been for that innocent girl, could she never have known the fatal truth!

"I am grieved, Alice," Lady Howard at length replied, "that you have lost your little friend's society; but perhaps this separation is only on account of Fanny's having been naughty, and that she is to be punished for a few days, by not being permitted to talk with her accustomed play-fellows, and perhaps she will be in the square again soon; therefore do not cry, love, and vex yourself so, my sweet child; besides, you will soon make more new friends; there are many other pretty agreeable girls of your own age, Alice, to fill her place; so kiss me dear, and promise me not to cry any more."

Thus did Lady Howard try to deceive her child—try to deceive herself; but the thorn was in her heart.

"I forget Fanny?" asked the fond impetuous girl. "I forget Fanny, mamma. Never!—and Henry——!"

"Oh, Alice, as to Henry, do not tell him any thing about the matter. He is going abroad in two or three days, and need not know it, it will only give him pain; so let me see, Alice, how well you can keep a secret, and say nothing about Fanny Harcourt to your brother."

The child put her arms round Lady Howard's neck and kissed her fervently, but said, "forget Fanny Harcourt! never, mamma. She is a good dear girl, and she loves me, I know she does, and I will always love her; but if you wish I should not, I will not tell Henry, unless he asks me about her, and asks me why she is not in the square, when he goes there to-morrow, which he means to do, to bid her good bye; but then you know, I must not tell a lie; what can I tell him but the truth?" More daggers to poor Lady Howard.

"Alice, love, do not say you will never forget Fanny Harcourt, for you *will* do so; it is not natural at your age—at any age, not to forget; but you will please me very much by keeping this silly story a secret from your brother."

"Then I will, to please you, mamma; you know I would do any thing but——." And Alice hesitated, and smiled through her tears—"forget Fanny."

"Thank you, thank you, for promising to keep this a secret from your brother; thank you, dearest,—you are very kind."

"Do not thank *me*, mamma," and the child was struck by the steadfast gaze of her mother; but then again in a moment she thought only of Fanny Harcourt, of her own vexation at being separated from her, and she relapsed into sorrow and lamentation.

When she received no answer, she again fixed her eyes, questioningly, upon Lady Howard.

What could be the meaning of that odd stare, with which her

mother's eye was suddenly rivetted to the newspaper, that lay on the breakfast table, before her.

Alice felt that there was something peculiar in her countenance—something that she had never seen there before; but she was very young, not fourteen—ignorant as well as innocent of sin and shame, and totally at a loss for a meaning of the expression, which in after-times recurred to her with anguish that never could be entirely obliterated.

“Leave me, dearest Alice; at present I have letters to write—letters of business. Go to Miss Sharpe, and tell her I shall take you out with me this afternoon, and to-morrow, if papa has no objection, you shall go to the play.”

“That will be delightful!—Oh, dear mamma; you are the best mamma in the world: nobody ever was so good;” and she kissed Lady Howard a thousand times before she departed.

When alone, Lady Howard again took up the paper; she read, and re-read, “Festivities at Vernon Castle;” and then followed a long paragraph describing them, and the names of the illustrious visitors who had met to celebrate the birth-day of the heir-apparent, Lord Stuart, and closed with these words: “The Honourable Miss Agar presided as mistress of the festivities.”

What a history of the past—what a chronicle of sorrow and remorse did these lines open out, as it were, before the mind of her who read them! They fell like molten lead upon her heart: Lord Stuart was her own son—she had forfeited all right to his love,—she had incurred her child's abhorrence; at least, she had rendered herself despicable in his eyes. He must blush at the recollection of his mother.

Can any gratification of unhallowed love compensate for such a thought? His father too, the noblest, gentlest, kindest of human beings,—even she acknowledged that truth,—had he, in the midst of these gay revels, remembered that Lord Stuart had a mother, who had been his wife? and if he did, would he curse her in thought? Oh no! She knew he would not, and involuntarily a burst of admiration of his character was wrung from her; and, thinking upon all he had been to her,—all he was in the beautiful integrity of his noble being, the contrast with herself struck her in the freshness of a renewed feeling, and she said,—

“Wretch that I am! he is revenged; but Miss Agar—why is that serpent domiciliated in his house? Yet what right have I——” Lord Howard entered the room unexpectedly; her tears were visible; she endeavoured to wipe them away; she turned to the window, said something of the weather, and

pushed the newspaper under some books, as if by accident, and felt that Lord Howard was fixing his eyes upon her all the while, though she endeavoured to appear as if she was not conscious he was looking at her. There was an awkward silence. At last she said, with a half hysterical laugh,—

“Why are you staring at me, Howard? One would suppose I had been committing some crime.” Unlucky word.

“Not exactly that, Laura, *at present*,” (with emphasis,) “but you are playing a part which I don’t like; with me, at least, you may be sincere. Tell me what is the matter with you.”

“Nothing, nothing is the matter with me. What can be the matter with a poor creature, mewed up as I am, and never seeing a soul, but a few dull men, such as you choose to bring to the house?”

Lady Howard did not mean to be cross and impertinent, she only sought for some feeling that might cover the true one.

“It ill becomes *you*, Lady Howard, to find fault with my friends. You may be happy that I have a friend left who *will* come to us; and you must remember that you knew, when you left your first estate, the consequences, the humiliating consequences which, in despite of my tenderest care, *must* become *your* portion. Neither have you suffered alone; the man who ties a mill-stone about his neck cannot expect to swim on the surface.”

“You need not constantly remind me, Howard, of that which I know so well, and feel so deeply, at every moment of my existence—it is unmanly, ungenerous.”

“Nay, Laura, weep not; forgive me. We have mutually much to forgive each other. You know I love you. Pardon me, if I have been betrayed into harshness.”

“Pardon *me*, if I have forgotten the duty I owe you,—the only duty I can now fulfil.”

He kissed her affectionately. They both sighed deeply.

“Well, Laura, and now tell me what caused your tears before I entered. Remember, duplicity is my abhorrence. I know, alas! that to others it is almost necessary that we should occasionally practise deceit—to our inferiors, to our friends, to our children. Yes, (they looked mournfully in one another’s countenance,) we are separated from the world. ‘Unclean, unclean,’ as the lepers of old. But to each other! What need we of disguise? It is adding sin to sin.”

Lady Howard arose; she took the newspaper from beneath its hiding-place; she pointed to the paragraph about Vernon Castle. He read it slowly several times, and laying the paper down, he said,—

“Yes; this is gall and wormwood. Poor Laura! we have mingled the bitter cup for each other; we must drink it even to the very dregs.” He arose, and left her alone.

How heavily that day passed! Lady Howard went out at the accustomed hour, attended as usual by the insignia of her rank, brilliant equipage, numerous servants, more even than are customary. Did her heart ache the less? No; it ached the more. The curiosity of the vulgar—the impertinent smile of the great—the turning away of those who once knew her, and now tried not to seem to see her, were circumstances to which eighteen years might have inured her; and so they had in some degree, for what goad does not become gradually less sharp by continual use? But on this day these minutiae came with peculiar power of venom; every thing seemed to give her back the first agony of her guilt, without restoring that inebriation of the senses which made the world well lost for love. Lady Alice proposed to her mamma to stop at a shop of great public resort to buy her some gloves.

“Not there—not at that shop, Alice, love; we will go on to some other.”

But the child had already pulled the string of the carriage: it was in a moment closed in on every side by advancing ranks of other carriages, flying in all directions, and in one of these, which drove furiously against Lady Howard’s equipage, and broke the pole, was seated Lady Harcourt and her child.

“Oh, Fanny, dear Fanny!” screamed Lady Alice, “how glad I am to see you.”

“I hope we have not broke your carriage,” said the former.

“Oh, never mind,” cried Lady Alice, “we shall be able to talk.”

But at the moment, the coachman of Lady Harcourt, with one of those dexterous and dangerous rushes of coachmanship, drove half over a carriage that impeded his way, and while the affrighted crowd were screaming with terror, he passed like lightning down the street, and was lost to the eyes of the offended parties.

That coachman was the jewel of his lady’s establishment, and the admired Jehu of his tribe. Lady Howard was obliged to leave her equipage until another pole could be substituted for the broken one; and she had the mortification of hearing her name whispered to the right and to the left, and of seeing the various nods and glances which were exchanged as she entered the most fashionable of shops, which the *empressement* of the attendants to show her their choicest goods, and to offer her any thing which might calm her after the alarm she had re-

ceived, did not abate. These scenes Lady Howard had had the good taste and judgment always to avoid; and now, when for the first time she had become exposed to them and their consequences, she was as much distressed as though she had wilfully sought them.

Several young men, gay persons, notoriously such, who happened to be passing, and hearing of the accident, were particularly anxious to have an opportunity of seeing the secluded beauty; and the more so, as Lord Howard was a very jealous husband, and exceedingly averse to receiving them under his roof, though formerly he had lived in intimacy with them. These persons made this accident an excuse for offering their services to Lady Howard, and for being unusually officious in handing her to another carriage, which had been sent for to——Square.

The whole affair, though in fact nothing, grew into a story, as Lady Howard feared it would, and occasioned a temporary revival of her history. Her husband was displeased with her when he heard of the accident; this was unreasonable, but not unnatural. Many very kind-hearted men, with ill regulated tempers, are always cross when they are vexed, and especially with their wives. Lady Howard was not a woman to brook this injustice without saying that it was one, and a sort of second quarrel ensued.

“And pray did your servants suffer tamely the insolence of Lord Harcourt’s coachman?”

“Indeed they behaved very well. They could not stop the man, and they forbore any impertinent or unbecoming language; in short, the whole affair passed like lightning; there was no time for any one to think of any thing but their own safety.”

“And pray, madam, who escorted you from, and to your carriage?”

Lady Howard blushed as she pronounced the name of the two gentlemen who had been civil to her.

“You are always fortunate, madam, in meeting with the very persons I most particularly dislike; but it is of no consequence, it only adds another feature to our notoriety, but as to that cursed coachman of Lord Harcourt’s, his lordship shall give me ample apology for the fellow’s diabolical behaviour, or he shall know more about it.”

“My dear husband, I beseech you not, before Alice,” whispered the distressed mother, “do not speak harshly to me before our child.”

Lord Howard was soon softened, and the first impulse of

anger having subsided, he was all kindness again; but Lady Howard did not so readily return to a placid state of feeling; she could not brook being made to cry at one moment, and then be told to laugh the next; it was not in her nature to comply with this tyranny, and though she had acquired great self-command, the frequent wounds she received from him, whom alone she thought ought never to have made her conscious of her situation, had gradually hardened her feelings, and began to shake the very foundation of her love for him.

That day Lord Howard dined out: every body knows how inexpressibly melancholy it is to sit down to a sumptuous feast, surrounded by attendants, the only one to be waited upon; it is, as if some Banquos would rise up to surround the board; and many were the ghosts of departed hours that surrounded Lady Howard's melancholy dinner table.

She arose before the dessert could be set down, and was passing into her boudoir, when the groom of the chambers gave her a note. She opened it hastily, it was from the governess, Miss Sharpe, requesting, as her ladyship was alone, to be allowed half an hour's conversation with her.

"Tell Miss Sharpe to come in."

When that lady made her appearance, she entered with a little mincing step and self-satisfied air, bowing instead of court-seying, which she conceived to be the most fashionable mode of coming into a room.

"Sit down, pray, Miss Sharpe," Lady Howard said with that simple good breeding which puts the airs and graces of underbred persons to the rout: "I am always happy to see you when I am alone, that is, when my lord is out, and Alice does not require your society; come and tell me of her improvements, and what you think of her advancement in the several accomplishments which she is taught, especially what her masters think of her talents."

This kindness and natural ease of address puzzled Miss Sharpe for a moment, and she nearly forgot the set speech which she had studied for the occasion; but, recollecting herself, her own unequalled consequence, and unequalled virtue, (she was as ugly as a wizened apple,) she put her glass to one eye, while the other wandered off a thousand ways in a minute, and looking, as she thought, daggers to the person before whom she intended to show off, she said, "I regret, on Lady Alice's account, to declare to your ladyship that I can no longer live under your roof, and therefore I am come to give your ladyship warning, that you may suit yourself as quickly as possible with some other person to fill my place."

"How so, Miss Sharpe, has any thing given you offence?"

"A great many things, my lady."

"Indeed! you astonish me! why this is the first time I have ever heard you make any complaint, and you have lived with me nearly two years."

"Every thing does not unfold itself at once, your ladyship knows; I have met to-day with such an affront as I never thought to have met with in my life;" and here Miss Sharpe pulled out her pocket handkerchief and began to whimper.

"I am exceedingly concerned that you should have been thus insulted in our house. Did Alice give way to any of her passionate sallies,—was Henry rude, as school-boys sometimes are? Pray let me know your grievance, and I shall be the first to redress it; I should be exceedingly sorry you left Alice, she is so attached to you."

"Ah! poor dear Lady Alice, I truly feel for *her*; this is only the commencement of her sorrows; but your ladyship must know, that a young woman, (she was near forty,) a young girl, I may say, who has nothing but her character to depend upon, cannot run the risk of losing it without making an effort to retrieve her good name, that good name which never yet has borne the slightest taint of slander."

"And pray, Miss Sharpe," asked Lady Howard, authoritatively, though she trembled at her heart's core before the impertinent piece of frippery, who was covertly arraigning her; "and pray who has dared to slander your immaculate fame?"

"My lady, I hope your ladyship will excuse my entering upon particulars, it is a very delicate subject, one I do not wish to be obliged to enter upon in detail, but you know we are told not to meddle with pitch, lest we be defiled thereby; therefore we must not only avoid evil, but avoid even the appearance of evil; and in short, my lady, I mean to go to-morrow morning, I do not care whether I am paid my salary or not, so long as I am out of this house. I am much obliged to your ladyship for past favours, and I beg to offer my compliments to my lord. Poor dear Lady Alice will half break her heart, I know, but my character is all I have to depend upon, and therefore I have packed my trunks, and to-morrow I go."

"I never wish to detain any person in my service who is desirous of leaving it. Your salary shall be paid you; and as to your regrets about Alice, you may comfort yourself by the idea, that as soon as she knows how rudely, and how unexpectedly and inconveniently you have given me warning, she will cease to care for a person who has behaved so ill to her mamma. I wish you good night, Miss Sharpe." And Lady Howard left

the room. But though she had made the best of this unpleasant scene, she could not help saying to herself, "When such a creature has power to wound me, I am sunk low indeed!" and then that burning blush of shame, which was for ever scorching her cheek, burned with all its dire intensity. At such moments, nothing soothed Lady Howard but to look upon her children's innocent faces, and she went to her daughter's room, and saw her in childhood's rosy sleep, looking beautiful, but not in the quiet repose in which she usually beheld her. A murmuring voice of entreaty uttered indistinct sounds, and a few tears coursed down her cheeks.

Lady Howard hesitated whether or not to awake her, but Alice again fell into her child-like slumber, and she sat down by her bed-side, wishing those wishes for her peace and happiness which, in a mother's breast, are prayers.

The fact was, that Alice Talbot had forgotten, in the pleasure of driving about with her mother, and looking at all the pretty things which caught her eye, the pain she had felt that morning when her friendship with Fanny Harcourt was so suddenly and, to her, so unaccountably broken off; but when she lay down in bed, and that every feeling she had experienced during that day—every word she had said—every trifling circumstance which had occurred, returned to her memory, as it does to every one, not overcome by fatigue, at the time when they lie down to rest,—and that an approving or condemning conscience gives its award to the actions and thoughts of the past days,—those heart-rending words: "You must not play with that young lady and her brother any more, Miss Fanny; your mamma does not choose that you should,"—returned to her recollection, and sounded in her ears with all the harsh cruelty with which the cross voice of the stiff governess had uttered them, and made poor Alice weep anew, at the loss of her friend's society, till, tired with unhappiness, she dropped into sleep, but not the refreshing sleep that is generally the portion of the young, the innocent, the happy.

"Don't go, don't go,—Fanny, Fanny!" were the words she uttered when she closed her eyes, and these words she continued indistinctly to murmur as her mother watched her with an aching heart.

Lady Howard had endured mortifications, such as always attend upon conduct similar to her own. Scarcely a day had passed since she forsook her first husband, that some circumstance had not occurred to make her writhe with anguish, and hang her head down with shame, for she was not a woman who could brave the world's opinions.

She bore its rebuke well; knowing she had deserved the punishment. Yes; she had borne patiently the scorn of those who were perhaps more sinful than herself, but more wary,—those who made the cloak of a husband's sanction their apology to live for a lover,—those who idly or wantonly trifled with the reputation of their fellow-creatures and shed abroad the venom of detraction; and she had endured with resignation the silent contempt of others, whose blameless conduct rendered them harsh to the failings of their sex,

She had also meekly borne the sallies of her husband's temper, hard as it was to endure reproaches from *him*, for whom she had sacrificed every thing,—rank, station, consideration, virtue. All this, for sixteen long years she had endured,—and endured with a meekness and a passive courage surpassing all courage, save that of woman's; but *this day* brought with it a sorrow and a humbling upon which she had forgot to calculate; every thing was light, compared to this: she had seen her sins visited upon her innocent child.

The first pure affections of Alice Talbot's heart were to be uprooted for the offence of her mother; and those early friendships have a raciness and a vigour in them, which are never the growth of an after time.

Beware how ye extinguish or eradicate such primary shoots of affection, all ye who have the superintendence of childhood and youth! they are the germ of many virtues. Disinterestedness, heroism, constancy, truth, are component parts of the heart's first pure attachments.

How unlike those of later life, of which the very reverse are too often the characteristics! Oh! how frequently in age do we look back to the time when the first spontaneous bound of the heart was felt for a friend! It may be, that that friend proved fickle, or unworthy,—we may have long ceased to care for them; but the sentiment itself, abstracted from the object, was of so high and inspiring a nature, that its memory can never die. Of all this, Lady Howard thought, as she looked upon her sleeping child, and said,—

“Yes, dear one! your mother has blighted the very bud of your happiness; she marked you with the brand of sorrow and of shame in giving you birth;” and as she thought of this, she felt that arid agony which finds not the relief of tears.

Lady Howard knew the character which Lady Harcourt bore: it was that of a blameless, heartless, prudent person,—one who had never swerved for a moment from the narrow way—who had scrupulously adhered to the ceremonies of custom, and chosen her associates, not from any charm or at-

traction they might possess, but from certain straight lines of propriety by which she squared her every action.

She had a right, if any body had, to sit in judgment upon the conduct of others, and Lady Howard well knew that the verdict she would pronounce upon her child's holding any communion with her daughter, would be peremptory and irreversible:—"they shall never meet in intimacy more."

Her son, too, Henry Talbot, how would he bear,—when he returned to town the next day,—how would he bear a separation from his little wife, as he used to call Fanny Harcourt, without sifting the cause thoroughly.

"Yes," said Lady Howard, "the moment so long dreaded seems fast approaching. My children are to know their mother's crime."

Very terrible was the pillow, which should have been that of rest to Lady Howard, and the more so, because she had no one being to whom she dared unburthen her sorrow. Her husband was the last person whom she would remind of *his* misfortune—of her delinquency. With his ungovernable temper, to irritate was to drive him to desperation; and while remorse and shame had been mingled with her daily bread, her whole care was employed in soothing him into forgetfulness. She had rejoiced when his family or his friends had invited him to pass any time with them, and, though scorned herself, it cast a momentary ray of pleasure over her to see him courted and respected.

The evil she so much dreaded, did not however occur at that time, or for some years after. Fanny Harcourt went out of town, so did the Talbots; and, although Alice did not *forget* her play fellow, the departure of her governess, to whom she was much attached, made a diversion to her sorrow; and Lady Howard's judicious kindness to her child restored the latter to her hitherto usual state of happiness.

CHAPTER II.

How fragrant was the jasmine's flower!

How pure its spotless hue!

It breath'd of sweets, one short lived hour,

Bloom'd gay and bright, like you,

Then died—to tell that beauty's reign,

Is transient as 't is fair,

And that the blight of folly's stain,

Or crush of griping care,

Will make the flowers of young love die;

Its fragile stem will sever;

Will soil the bloom of purity

And fade life's flower for ever.—MS. SONG.

It is Alice Talbot's birth-day, she is seventeen—her parents' delighted eyes behold her with admiration—she is beautiful, and good as beautiful—she leaves the room, Lord and Lady Howard are alone.

“The time is come, I tell you Laura, when all must be known. Do you wish that your children should hear our story from the lips of strangers? Shall your crime be told them by one of that world, who justly condemn the shame, though they pity the offender? or, will you, that I——?”

“No, Charles, no; *our* crimes must first become known to our children by our own lips, but I would fain put off the evil day. Yet it is hard that I——; but no matter, if *you* think it is right—if you think it is for their happiness, to have the veil torn from their eyes, which, hitherto, we have been fortunate in placing before them——tell them all——; or, if you order it so, I will, myself, declare to them that I am——, that their mother is——,” and she wept; but she resumed, drying her tears, and suffocating sobs, which impeded her utterance, “but it is my part to tell my daughter—yours to tell your son, perhaps—it is I who ought to be humbled, yes, even to the dust, before mine own offspring—for that *she* is my offspring—. I hope, Charles, she will not turn and hate me, as some have done. I have been a fond, nay, a good mother;” and Lady Howard looked humbly, and inquiringly, in her husband's face as though she sought his word of testimony, to set the seal to the praise she had ventured to bestow upon herself. “I have nursed her Charles at my breast. I have been her instructor as well as her play-fellow. I have tended her in sickness, and taught her to lisp her first prayer. I have prayed *with* her, and *for* her. I have prayed to be

blessed by her love, and to be allowed its continuance; and we have mutually lifted up our voices to heaven to call down blessings on her father's head. All this I say, not for vain boasting,—woe is me of what can I boast?—but to comfort myself with the assurance that she, at least, can never despise—never cast me from her. But if she did—if she changes only in one hue of a less vivid affection than she has hitherto shown me, I shall be quick at perceiving it, quick at supposing it, even though it is not so; ‘for conscience makes cowards of us all.’ Oh! I have hoarded my child's love, as a miser hoards his gold. I am greedy of it—I cannot forego one grain of it. I have grudged any one's sharing it, save yourself. Henry, dear Henry, too, not less dear, though less feared perhaps, what will he feel towards me, when he knows the truth? Oh, love mine! it is very terrible. Could we not hide our fatal secret from them yet a little longer! A few years, and I, please God, shall be at rest. Could we not pass these years as we have hitherto done, in retirement, in seclusion! Could we not——”

“Laura, dearest Laura! I have felt every word you have uttered, entering like daggers into my very soul. I have not had sufficient courage to interrupt you, till now;—and now, if you could but see the ten thousandth part of what I endure, it might, perhaps, lessen your own sufferings, to know that they are more than shared. I am the responsible one, after all, dearest Laura. I wooed you, to your undoing. I am the one to whom the world will look for justice being done to the children of our unhappy loves; and what will be the condemnation passed upon me, not only by the world, but by my own conscience, if, to spare ourselves some pangs, we neglect to give our children such advantages, and afford them such chances of happiness, as our position still may have in store for them. Are we, Laura, to sacrifice these to a selfish pride, or morbid sensitiveness? surely not. Nothing can justify us longer in wearing the mask we have hitherto worn. I am sick of living in a state of duplicity with my children. The time is come, when they must judge us; ay, judge their parents, as they will be judged in their turn by their own offspring; and whatever the avowal may cost, it must be made.”

“Charles, I would die for my children, our children, if that could do them any good; and God knows, it is long since I have had any pleasure in existence, apart from the life I lead in them. But there is something, call it selfishness, if you will; there is something of human infirmity in me, which makes me feel and say that your cold-blooded feelings, towards myself the total indifference you manifest for my sufferings, nay, hu-

miliations, make me look back with a degree of pity for myself seeing how little loved I am now, by the man for whom——.” She wept again; she wept bitterly.

“Am I never to hear any thing but reproaches? Never to see any thing but tears? You have smiles to give to the whole world—but to me——.”

“The whole world,” said Lady Howard, suddenly ceasing to cry, and looking up haughtily, “what world do I see—to whom do you allude—when do *I* smile? or, when I do, is it not a mask, that covers the canker-worm of despair?”

“Laura, you vex me:—you were once proverbially sweet tempered—once beautiful, and lively, and gay,—you are none of these now; and am I to blame if I love you less? By heaven it were as the song says, ‘perjury to love you now’—changed as you are become, from the person I professed to adore.”

“And who has soured my temper? Who has withered the youth of my person, before its time? Is it not you, Lord Howard? and *you* are the person to taunt me with the faults, of which you have, alone, been the occasion.”

“It is a pity, madam, that we should ever have committed so great a mistake, as to suppose that we could go on for ever loving, and for ever loved: but we are not the only couple who have made the same mistake; there is a remedy, even for this desperate case.”

“Name it.”

“Separation. But in that case, the children are under the husband’s guardianship, you know.”

“Charles, forgive me—forgive your distracted wife” and she fell at his knees. “Leave me not—take not the children from me. I have been betrayed into violence. I am the veriest wretch breathing. But think of all I suffer; think how tremblingly alive I am at the idea of your caring less for me than you once did. The very restraint under which you live, in having *such* a wife, terrifies me with the thought, that I shall lose you. I have never, till lately, been thus exacting—thus profuse of expressions of jealous love; for it is only love after all, that has made me petulant, and provoking. Charles, I will master this too much of fondness. I know that the very reproaches I make are so many scare-crows, to frighten away love. I did not use to be ill-tempered. Oh! what a world of unseen evils spring up from one root of error; but I will check this irritation, this nervous tremor. I will be what I have hitherto been, a fond, obedient, and devoted wife. I will do anything to please you. I will go this moment, and pour into my child’s ear the fearful history of her mother’s fall.”

Lord Howard had looked at her, as she uttered these words with much sterner resolve than he had ever shown towards her, till she professed her willingness to obey his wishes, and tell her child the secret of her birth ; and then the husband and the father pleaded within him ; he raised her in his arms,—he spoke to her with lover-like earnestness—all was forgotten, and they remembered only that they were the whole world to each other.

“ Since then, dearest Laura, you deem it best to leave our children in ignorance, be it so ; after all, I only wish *your* happiness, their advantage—for the present we will forego making any change in our life ; and whenever it may be necessary, by some untoward chance, to declare the truth to them, then will be time enough for us to decide in what manner we shall fulfil our painful task.”

Lady Howard thanked her husband with all the earnestness and warmth of one who seems to have escaped from death to life ; and *he* felt satisfied with himself for having yielded to her wishes.

There were times when Lord Howard lamented the step he had taken. How should it be otherwise ? for though the world have so decided the question of wrong and right, as to make the man, in such cases, immaculate, the woman, impure : though the one is thrust out of society, the latter is courted and well received. Still, no man can be inwardly at ease, who sees his wife set apart, as a thing the good avoid, and the wordly fear to acknowledge, lest their own errors might be drawn out to light by the contact. And in measure as his children grew up, these melancholy thoughts intruded themselves more frequently, and with more poignant regret.

He was naturally a man of violent temper ; and lately Lady Howard had become irritable. Affected by the new trial that came upon her, that of knowing her own offspring must very soon learn their mother's story, she became comparatively careless of all else ; and the great object of her erring life, which had been, hitherto the preservation of her husband's affections, had become secondary.

“ Good news, good news, mamma !” cried Lady Alice Talbot, flying into her mother's apartment like a gossamer, “ Henry will be here to-morrow. Oh, what happiness !”

“ Happiness, indeed,” said Lady Howard ; “ go tell your papa, dearest ; but of course Henry has written to him,” and Lord Howard entered the room at the moment with an open letter in his hand.

“ From Henry,” he said exultingly, “ he will be with us to-morrow. He sends you a thousand loves, Laura.”

Lady Howard took the letter, her eyes filled with tears,—“so then,” she thought, “he has written to his father, to Alice, but not to his mother!”

“Thank God, we shall see him once again,” she said aloud, stifling the painful supposition, that he loved her less than formerly; and, endeavouring not to give way to the ideas that crossed her mind. “Henry knows all,” she thought, “and he despises me.”

But when her son arrived, when he rushed into her arms, and cried out, “Dearest mother, dearest father, dearest home!—do I see you once again? do I come back to you, and find all unchanged? Yet, not so, there is Alice grown up a woman, I declare; but, in short, every thing exactly as I could wish to find it—all so beautiful, all so comfortable, so much better than any other place, so much more perfect than any other human being in the world.”

When Lady Howard heard these delightful words, which at once carried bliss and pain to her heart, she knew that as yet her son was in ignorance of the truth. A thousand questions were asked and answered by all parties; there was that hurry of spirits attendant on a first meeting after a long absence, which leaves every subject that is touched upon in a confused mist, as it were; all is indistinct except the one absorbing idea, that we are once more with those dearest to us.

It was not till a few days had passed after the re-union of the family that in talking over the persons Lord Talbot had met at Rome, he said, one day to his mother, “Of all the acquaintances I have made, there is not one I like half so well as young Stuart.” Lady Howard was electrified, but she spoke not, moved not. Her son went on talking.

“He is a fine spirited fellow; he saved a man from being drowned in the Tiber, one of those Italian scoundrels too, who might just as well have been drowned for all the good he will ever do; and, instead of buying objects of virtue, he gave away all his money in charities. I believe the cardinal would have canonized him for a saint, if he had continued to remain with them and given out the same largesses to all their churches. He had but one fault that I could find out; he was generally very melancholy, and when we made parties to go and shoot, at the villas in the neighbourhood, he would seldom accompany us. I think he must have been in love, for he was always longing for letters from England, and when a post arrived which brought letters for me, and none for him, he looked as though he could have hung himself:—one day in particular when I got a long letter from you, dear mother, in which you

gave me an account of your expedition to Fountain's Abbey, I read him a part of it aloud, and I cannot think why, (for there was nothing particularly touching in the letter, though it was very dear, as yours always are, my dear mother) he absolutely shed tears. 'How I envy you, Howard,' he said—'how I do envy you! You have a mother—a fond and loving mother, but I'—and he sighed and said no more. What is become of Lady Vernon?—is she dead?"

"No, she is not dead, but worse," replied Lady Howard in a calm under-tone that excited no suspicion in her son.

"Worse, mamma," (for so he sometimes loved to call his mother, when unheard by others) "Worse! what do you mean?"

"Lady Vernon left her husband, and was divorced, and married another man."

"That is a sad story indeed. I cannot conceive any thing more distressing to a child, than to know of its mother's crimes; a father's is bad enough, but a mother's,—that is indeed a heartbreak."

Had Lord Talbot asked the name of Lady Vernon's present husband, he would have known that that heart-rending situation was his own; but he soon changed the conversation, and Lady Howard complaining of feeling unwell, retired to her apartment to reflect on the consequences that would ensue to her when her children should be acquainted, as they soon must be, with the fatal truth. She half wished her son had pushed the question one point farther, but she had not courage to say, "I am her."

The next day, as Mr. Willoughby was driving Lord Talbot through the Park, the latter exclaimed—

"What a beautiful creature that is!"

"Where, where?" rejoined his companion, looking round, "There are so many beautiful creatures, how should I know which you mean?"

"Oh, but that one—there, to the left; so different from every other, in the vis-a-vis."

"Oh! there are a thousand handsomer persons than Lady Fanny Harcourt; but she is a sweet, blushing, lively girl, quite new. You will not lose your character for a *conoscente* in professing yourself one of her *adorateurs*; and doubtless Lady Harcourt will give you every encouragement, notwithstanding all her prudery."

"Fanny Harcourt!" repeated Lord Talbot. "Can that be the little girl I used to play with in the Square some six or seven years ago? I must ascertain the fact. Do you know her? Will you introduce me to her?"

“Oh, nothing, so easy ; yet when I say that, I take upon me, perhaps, more than I have a right to do, for Lady Harcourt is one of those disagreeably proper people, who never allow of any acquaintance being formed with her daughter by any person, whom she does not conceive to be altogether out of the question, as your humble servant, for instance, or else who is of sufficient note in the world to become, what she would deem, an eligible alliance. Of the latter, I must conceive your lordship to be one, though, as I said before, she is starch and stiff enough to go back to old stories, and make them great objections in your case. In the mean time, you can renew your acquaintance with the daughter. I'll present you to her to-night at Almack's.”

“What old stories do you allude to, that Lady Harcourt might raise personal objections to me upon?”

“Come, Talbot, it is not possible that you should be in ignorance of——,” and he looked him full in the face.

“I am in total ignorance of any story being attached to me that is in any way disgraceful,” replied Lord Talbot, in a displeased tone of voice ; “and I must insist upon your explaining your meaning, for such unpleasant and dark innuendos.”

“Nay now, my good fellow, dear Lord Talbot reflect how unreasonable your anger is. I accidentally alluded to a circumstance which all the world knows ; of course I could not suppose you to be the only one to remain in ignorance of it—you, whom it most concerns ; and now, when I accidentally discover that you are so, you are angry with me for not entering into details, which would only make you unhappy, and do no good, since the thing is irremediable.”

“Mr. Willoughby, I am not in a passion : but when one man tells another that a dark story attaches to him, or to his family, which is the same thing, feeling as I feel towards mine, and then refuses to give any account whatever of this unaccountable allegation, why then, it is very natural to desire an explanation.”

“You distress me greatly, Talbot, for I have a real regard for you, and I foresee that whether I answer you, or do not answer you, you will equally hate me. At all events, I must drop this subject now,—to resume it at another time, if you insist upon it ; but allow me a few hours' reflection, and press me at this moment no further.”

Lord Talbot replied,

“Be it so ;” and soon after was set down at his own door. His usual gay cheerfulness was flown ; a weight, that he could

not account for, oppressed him, and his family observed it. They inquired kindly if he was ill; he answered pettishly, that he was quite well, and going that night to Almack's.

"Ah," thought his mother, "he has heard some rumour that will soon come to him in the shape of a fact,—a horrid fact, that will poison the rest of his existence."

Lord Talbot did go to Almack's; and without the intervention of Mr. Willoughby, was presented to Fanny Harcourt. They talked, danced, and laughed together; they recognised each other as former playfellows, but mutually wondered at the change a few years had produced in them,—a change, not for the worse, but for the better; but a change which placed them, however, on a very different footing towards each other; and after the first pleasure of recognition was over, something of shyness and outward reserve followed,—they were no longer children.

After the first cotillon was finished, they walked, as all well-regulated young persons do, in quest of Lady Harcourt. She was sitting on one of the highest benches, and it was with some difficulty Lord Talbot contrived to re-instate his partner by her mother's side. Fanny attempted to make an introduction between the latter and her partner, but the noise of the music, and the talkers, and the particularly unfavourable position in which they stood, prevented either hearing what the other said. Bows and curtseys were all that passed at that time.

"Well, Fanny, and who introduced you to that young man? I have always told you to be particularly cautious in making new acquaintances," said Lady Harcourt to her daughter; "but in the present case, I think there can be no impropriety in your *dancing* with Lord Talbot; nevertheless, you know I broke off your intimacy with his sister when you were children, because it would be impossible to know the girl without knowing the mother, and that is out of the question; but, with a little prudent management, it is easy to avoid knowing *her*; of course, in her circumstances, she, poor thing! can never cross your path,—never move in the society which you frequent."

"Poor dear Lady Alice!" rejoined Fanny, "I never can think of her without being ready to cry; she was so fond of me."

"So fond of a fiddle-stick! Little girls are fond of their dolls, but they do not play with them when they grow up, and I should not have been justified, as a parent, had I encouraged

your *engouement* for Alice Howard ; but all that is gone by. I don't know how I came to speak upon the subject. There, look, Fanny,—there is Lord Stuart, the Marquis of Vernon that will be. He is, I am sure, coming with most flattering eagerness of manner to ask you to dance. Now do not look haughty and shy, just when you ought to do otherwise."

"Any thing," thought Miss Harcourt, "to escape from this lecture ;" and she accepted Lord Stuart's invitation, and joined the dancers.

Lord Talbot, observing that Lady Harcourt had a vacant place next to her, hastened to avail himself of it. He spoke first of indifferent matters, but with such nature and grace, that he softened even the suspicious and cautious temper of his hearer, and then passing on to a subject which was dear to her—(for what mother's heart, however cold to others, does not warm to her child's praises)—he declared he never should have recognised Miss Harcourt again, so much more beautiful was she become since the happy days of his boyhood, when he had played with her in the square. "I quite long to see my sister out, and that she should have the advantage of being in the gay world at the same time as Miss Harcourt. Once they were great friends, (he added) as children, and he hoped they would be so in youth. I never could conceive why their friendship was broken off. I believe some cross governess that my mother sent away afterwards, was at the bottom of that separation."

Lady Harcourt felt embarrassed ; she did not wish to cast off Lord Talbot altogether, lest the better and higher game she aimed at might fail to be caught ; and yet, to acknowledge any thing that looked like the opening of an acquaintanceship with Lady Howard, made her risk any thing, every thing, sooner than fall under that dreaded odium, and she replied dryly, "I never was acquainted with Lady Howard."

Lord Talbot felt that all was not amicable between her and his mother, and concluded the former must be in the wrong ; but for the present dropped any farther elucidation of the subject ; and as his eyes followed Lady Fanny in the dance, he observed, "How well she dances ! what grace !—and I must acknowledge my friend Stuart is a partner worthy of her."

"Your friend Stuart, do you know Lord Stuart?"

"Yes, to be sure, why should I not ? is there any thing so strange in that ?"

"Why, really you astonish me, Lord Talbot ; I should not have thought it possible that at your age you could have been,

—I beg your pardon a thousand times,—I am distressed beyond measure, at having started a subject which——”

Lord Talbot felt as if some unseen power were hovering over him for evil ; or, in plain English, that some mystery surrounded him which he was determined to elucidate ; and yet he felt an invincible dislike to do so at the present moment, as he pondered on what he should reply to Lady Harcourt.

Her daughter and Lord Stuart approached ; of course he rose and bowing to Miss Harcourt, resigned his place to her.

“Stuart,” he said aloud, “At what hour to-morrow will you allow me to see you for half-an-hour alone?”

“Any hour you choose till three o’clock.”

“At two, then,—good-night.”

“What ! going so early ?”

“Yes, I am not very well,” and he walked as hastily as he could through the crowd, and Miss Harcourt saw him leave the ball-room.

“I am sorry Lord Talbot is gone, mamma ; I was so happy to meet with him again ; and he is grown so handsome.”

“He is very well as to personal appearance ; and he will be Lord Howard, and have a magnificent estate ; but what are all these advantages worth, when there is not a respectable foundation for them to rest upon ? It is in vain to deceive you, Fanny, or to allow you to deceive yourself. I think it my duty to warn you as my child. That lady Howard *was* Lady Vernon ; that she left her husband (and such a husband) to run off with Lord Howard. Although this scandalous affair happened twenty years ago, still, now that her children are grown up, Lord Talbot *à parti* for those who regard worldly advantages more than respectability of character, the matter will be discussed, and the whole thing be brought forward again. How it should chance that Lord Stuart is the dear friend of Lord Talbot, and that neither of them should know the story of their birth, is quite an enigma ; but so it is, that is evident, from a conversation I held with the latter just now. This state of things cannot, however, continue, and how it may end, who can say ? At all events let us be cautious, and have nothing to do with this tripotage ;—by keeping aloof we shall be able to judge of what it may be expedient to do hereafter, but at present it would be highly indecorous that we encourage Lord Talbot to form habits of intimacy, with us, which we might be obliged afterwards to forego.”

“What a distressing story, mamma. How I pity these young men, they both seem so amiable ! What will be their feelings when they come to know that they are brothers?”

“Ah! these are the sad consequences which arise out of the light conduct of our sex. Let these things be a warning to you, Fanny.”

Miss Harcourt went home with a sadder heart than she had come out. How deep an impression may be made in a short space of time! Lord Talbot's image had fixed itself in Miss Harcourt's fancy, and all night long she dreamed about brothers, and fighting, and the various incidents which her waking thoughts had vaguely, but fearfully suggested, and which were now magnified and rendered more horrible by the inexplicable mirror of sleep, in which we see not always darkly, but sometimes with a distinctness and a colouring, that is even more vivid than life itself.

When Lord Talbot left Almack's he went to Mr. Willoughby's lodgings, and found him at home, and not yet gone to bed. He requested to be allowed five minutes' conversation with him. Of course the request was granted.

“Willoughby, your enigmatical conversation this morning has been followed by one equally incomprehensible from another person. I entreat you to explain yourself. Nay, I insist upon your doing so.”

“Lord Talbot, I am the last man in the world who could wish to insult you, or to give you a moment's pain; but I am not to be bullied into any thing. Having made this preamble, and concluding that you allow I am sincere, and in the right, I will be guided by your wishes as to the explanation you demand, having first made you aware that such explanation cannot fail of giving you just cause of deep but irremediable regret, and that I may be hated by your parents for having done so for evermore. Think well, therefore, before you press me further on this subject and be assured that I am your friend.”

“It matters not,” replied Lord Talbot impetuously, “what happens,—I must know the truth—tell it me?”

“Remember, I do so with feelings of deep regret. Your mother, Lady Howard, was the wife of Lord Vernon. Lord Stuart is her son by her first husband; she ran off, and left him, and was divorced,—married your father, and you and your sister are the fruits of that marriage.”

Lord Talbot did not speak, his teeth were close set together, and cold perspiration broke out on his forehead.

Mr. Willoughby feared that he would go into convulsions; and brought him some cordials, and took his hand and implored him to speak, and say that he forgave him, for having been the

unwilling organ through which he had heard this painful fact.

At length he said, in a low under tone of voice, "Nothing can prepare one for the knowledge of such disgrace; but had my father or my mother only told me that I am the son of a divorced woman, I could have borne it better, it was very cruel in them to deceive me; it was very wrong; and what could they gain by such deception? only the protraction of that secret, the discovery of which, come when it might, would have been robbed of its bitterness, in being told by a parent."

Mr. Willoughby, whose feelings upon such a subject were very different from those of his young friend, offered him some of those consolations with which a long admixture with life, and its debasing realities, supplied him.

"It is unpleasant, my dear Talbot, certainly; but the case is so common; it is so smoothed down by the indulgence of the world; so many are interested in being compassionate, the surest way of meeting sympathy; and so many persons don't care three straws about the matter, that really, if you were not so young and new, I should half laugh at you, for this excess of sorrow, and by-gone grief, with which you have nothing to do. Then reflect on your advantages; fortunately, your birth is legitimate.—You must be Earl Howard. You are very rich, very handsome. Will any person, whom you select for your bride, love you one iota the less for being the son of the divorced Lady Vernon? You are raising up giants, and preparing to fight them, but will find them mere phantoms, after all."

Lord Talbot looked as if he could have annihilated his friend.

At length he said, "If such are your opinions, if such are the opinions of the world in general, I forswear it, and your friendship also. I will never blush before the eyes of the hardened multitude,—whether they feel for my shame, or not, I shall feel it for myself,—for those who are far dearer than myself; and from this moment I will forego all society; I will lead a life of retirement; but, I will never mingle with the world again."

Mr. Willoughby heard these words, as he would have done the ravings of an excited madman; but he was a really good tempered, kind person; and though, at his age, and living as he had lived, it was utterly impossible that he could enter into Lord Talbot's feelings, still he understood, to a certain degree, that the fact which had come to his knowledge was one that

could not fail to give him pain, and he lamented that he should, himself, have been the unfortunate person to have made the disclosure to Lord Talbot.

It may well be said, that we cannot put ourselves in the place of another; and never was this more truly exemplified, than in the two persons here described.

Mr. Willoughby slept just as well that night as if Lady Howard had never been divorced; but Lord Talbot passed the night in wakeful and miserable watchings.

“So then,” he thought, “this dear home, to which I looked forward to return with such pride and delight, such rooted affection, is no longer a home for me. Can I see my parents, knowing that they ought never to have been such, and be as placidly happy, in their presence, as honourably proud of them, as I have been?—impossible! I love them still, it is true,—love them, love my mother—Oh, God! you know how I love her! It is for that reason, I can never bear to live under the same roof with her—never! And my father too; why did he not inure me to the knowledge of my humiliation, by an early disclosure of the fact? Why was I doomed to hear from a stranger’s lips, that which was to blast my existence? I go again into the world, among the sneers of the vicious, and the pity of the good!—never, never! And Stuart, poor Stuart! Brother of my heart, brother in my wretchedness, brother of my shame. Will the dreadful fact, when revealed, incur your hatred? will you despise me?”

In similar thoughts with these, the high-spirited young Lord Talbot passed a night of restless fever.

He was punctual to the hour, which he had named the night before, for meeting him; and he found Lord Stuart waiting for him. The same gay, unconcerned, happy countenance greeted him with smiles, as it was always wont to do.

Lord Talbot had sought his friend, in the hope that he could have rendered Mr. Willoughby’s dark speeches plain to him; but now he came not to have his own doubts solved, but to carry his misery and wretchedness into his friend’s heart.

He hesitated—he doubted if he was right in acting as he had intended, in the first impulse of wounded feeling; and then he decided that he should not be justified in such a mode of conduct. “No,” he thought, “I will go where no person can know my sufferings, To live on in the world, and not betray my knowledge of the fact, would be impossible; and then I could not be answerable for the consequences. I should draw upon

my family that contumely which I would die to avert: so, I will be silent, and depart."

When Lord Talbot met his brother, he said—

"Stuart, I sought you to converse about a subject, upon which I have since thought it best to be silent. I have, in fact, then, nothing to say to you; except to request, that when you hear me spoken of as a madman; an ill-tempered, strange, unaccountable being: you will not give credit to the charge, but on the contrary, believe, that I have weighty reasons for absenting myself from the society of my own family;—and yet, think not that I have done any thing to merit the voluntary exile from my country, which I purpose to make. Promise me, Stuart,—there's a good fellow—promise me," and he tendered his hand, "always to be my friend."

"How now, Talbot! what freak have you taken into your head? Who are you in love with? What has so discomposed you? A good joke, indeed! because some capricious woman has played you false, to talk of leaving your friends, your country;—really, I always thought you a little high-flown, but this idea is, beyond all comparison, wild."

"Stuart, I am not romantic, nor fanciful, I am only miserable. Remember, I charge you, forget me not, entirely;—think of me as one, who is very much attached to you, and let that thought secure me a return."

"Well, is *this all* you have to say to me?" asked Lord Stuart, laughing.

"Yes, all."

"Well, then, I must humour you, I suppose, and say, yes. Talbot, to be serious; you know I have always considered you as a brother; I have both envied, and loved you; but now that you have taken this strange, melancholy fancy into your head, I must, instead of envying, pity you."

"Oh, yes! that is just the word for it; and so, to break off this useless conference, farewell—be happy!" and he left the room.

Lord Stuart attempted to detain him, but he was already in the street, and out of sight in a moment.

CHAPTER III.

“How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name.
O! in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!
That tongue that tells the story of thy days,
Making lascivious comments on thy sport,
Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise;
Naming thy name blesses an ill report.
Oh! what a mansion have those vices got,
Which, for a habitation, chose out thee!
Where Beauty’s veil doth cover every blot,
And all things turn to fair, that eyes can see!
Take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege,
The hardest knife ill used doth lose his edge.

SHAKESPEARE’S *Sonnets*, XCV.

It was now, as Lord Surrey hath it in his beautiful verses, the “soote season,” not merely for bud and flower, but for balls and revels of every kind; and after much consultation between Lord and Lady Howard, they agreed that the former should occasionally escort their daughter, and lead her among the tribe of damsels, who, all with some pretensions or other, entered as competitors for hearts and admiration, on the arena of life.

Poor Lady Howard!—she was never to see that proudest day for a mother’s heart, the world’s approval of her child; she was only to hear it through her husband, that Lady Alice Talbot was reckoned the most perfect beauty that had been seen for years.

Many were pretty—the young are always pretty; but the sort of beauty which an artist admires, the air, which is more rare even than beauty’s self, and produces an effect, which even the vulgar own, though they know not whence it proceeds,—were the peculiar attributes of Lady Alice, and marked her out as a person altogether different from the other beauties of the day.

A great ball was given, which was said, as all balls are in their turn, to be the finest that ever had been, or ever was to be. Lady Alice, of course, was asked. Though several ladies with old daughters had said that they did not think *they* should accept *their* invitation, since so many queer characters were to be admitted, and that now-a-days, it was no longer a distinction

to be invited to *such* things, where every body who could dress well, was as much noticed as the highest and most renowned of the land.

Every soul, nevertheless, who was asked, hastened to go, and those who were not, spat out all their venom upon the scene, without any other effect, however, except that of rendering the fête more talked of, more praised, and more admired than it would have been had it met with no detraction.

Lord Howard paraded his daughter round the rooms and the illuminated gardens, and gathered up the praises he heard bestowed upon her beauty in his heart of hearts.

He was a proud man and a proud father, and he had much reason to be gratified; but some malevolent whisperers occasionally were heard saying, "Oh, you know her mother can't appear, she is not received." And then a closer whisper followed, and then, "Oh! that is her father, you know, do not talk so loud."

How these few broken phrases, and others of a similar nature more or less offensive, wounded and irritated him! He showed his displeasure in his looks, and he dreaded lest his child should hear them; but her ears were not open as his were, to catch these painful sounds; full of innocent joy and buoyant spirits, she was only longing to dance; and delighted with the festive crowd, all of whom appeared to her as so many objects descended from the spheres, and she would not have supposed these observations applied to herself, even had she heard them, which she did not.

Several of the most distinguished young men in the room asked her to dance, and, above all, some who were not what is termed dancing men, either from laziness or finery, or both, eagerly sought *her* as a partner. Among these, Mr. Willoughby. She knew he was a friend of her brother's and therefore she paid him more than usual attention. Besides, he could be exceedingly agreeable, and was much to be liked *in a ball-room* for his own sake.

Lord Howard could have wished his daughter a more eligible partner, but any thing was a relief in comparison to having her upon his arm, seeing that she attracted all eyes, and excited all the remarks which were so painful to him, and which he was under a constant restraint to endeavour to prevent her from hearing, addressing her always at the moment when such observations were made.

"If this is to continue always thus," he thought, "I should not be able to endure it;" and at last he became so irritable, that several of his oldest and best friends perceived it,

Ah, poor Howard ! He was not the man to run his head into the noose ; he ought to have known himself better ; other folks take these matters coolly, but he cannot, and his daughter is so handsome, that it is impossible she should pass by without comment, and the peculiarity of being always alone with her father, inquired into.

Of all those who appeared to take particular cognizance of Lady Alice, an elderly maiden lady seemed the most persevering. The Honourable Miss Agar had passed from youth to age, unloving and unloved, and yet she was still to be seen at every place of public resort ; every body wondered *why* she was there, *how* she got there, and what pleasure she could find in such assemblies ; but their wonder had to *tire* and begin again, for there she was, in renewed rouge and wrinkles at every fresh scene of festivity.

“ I wish to be introduced to Lady Alice Talbot,” said the Honourable Miss Agar to the lady at whose house the present brilliant assembly was held ; “ will you make us acquainted ? ”

“ Poor thing ! *I* knew her mother formerly, a hundred years ago,” (in a very low whisper,) “ she is very like her,” (putting up her eyeglass,)—“ resembles Lady Howard strikingly, only she is not so handsome as her mother was when Lady Vernon. Ah ! it makes me melancholy, I declare, quite so,—yes, to look at that poor thing and think !—but you will introduce me, will you not ? ”

The hostess was a matter-of-fact decided person of brusque manners, who never lost time in useless courtesies, or wasted moments in reflection. Actions, not words, was her favourite maxim, so, turning short round, she said to Lady Alice, “ Miss Agar desires to be introduced to you.”

Lady Alice rose from her chair and interrupted some interesting speech her partner was addressing to her, for which interruption he wished the Honourable Miss Agar at the bottom of the Serpentine.

“ Miss Agar wishes to be introduced to you,” repeated the lady of the house in a loud voice. And Alice smiled and curtsied her assent to the painted mummy who stood before her, and the introduction between an angel and a demon, it might be said, was made.

Miss Agar now took a nearer scrutiny of Lady Alice’s person than she had yet done ; looked at her with effrontery from head to foot, and continued, though she saw Lady Alice was distressed, to gaze at her with that bold stare which such women as herself acquire in their dark career, and which

fastens itself, like a mark made with a burning brand, upon their features.

At all times Lady Alice was timid, and in making a new acquaintance particularly so; but on this occasion she felt the blood mount to her cheeks, and cover her face and neck with a crimson blush of mingled modesty and indignation at such an impertinent survey. For a few moments she stood in silence before Miss Agar; she had not a word to say either of civility or of displeasure. At length she roused herself to defy so rude an examination, and she met Miss Agar's searching eyes with an expression of displeasure, which induced that lady to move towards a vacant seat which was near. Alice too reseated herself, not from any wish to be near Miss Agar, whose manners and appearance were singularly repugnant to her, but because she observed her father was in deep conversation with another gentleman, and that no other person of her acquaintance was near by whom she could take refuge: they were both silent. At length Miss Agar spake, and in one of those usual phrases, which, like moving the king's pawn at chess, opens the game, she wisely observed,

"How very hot it is, Lady Alice; between ourselves, the dear duchess does not manage the ventilation of her apartments dexterously; she was never famous for dexterity, you know, even in her love affairs—no; even there she failed in the conduct of the story."

Lady Alice replied naturally, "*I* know nothing at all about the matter, but I should never have supposed the Duchess of Clonmel had ever failed in compassing what she wished to attain."

"I have always heard her cited as the acknowledged beauty of her day, as a devoted wife, as a fond mother, and one on whom every blessing and every gift of fortune had been lavished; and surely her appearance does not belie this happy fate, for her face bears no marks or furrows of care or sorrow; it is fresher and more placid in expression than many a younger woman's. I do not know a countenance (my own mamma's excepted) which pleases me more; it is so contented, so beaming; she is a refreshing object, among all the factitious, painted, discontented faces, that one sees in the world."

Lady Alice did not mean to wound the person she was addressing, though the words had scarce escaped her lips, when she remembered that they were too applicable; but there was not any thing of the nature of spite in her; if she

was angry, if she despised a person, she could tell them so; but a passing cut, a stinging by word, or talking *at* any one, was beneath her. Lady Alice's failing, if failing it is, was enthusiasm, but it can only be termed a failing when it is suffered to act in ungoverned sway, and Lady Alice was too well principled, too really good, to be led away by impulses; still she was warm and genuinely sincere, and in talking to persons of Miss Agar's character, it was impossible that her sentiments, naturally expressed, should not wound the person to whom they were addressed.

Miss Agar consequently noted it on the tablets of her very tenacious memory, that Lady Alice had meant to affront her, that she was a very impertinent girl, very satirical, and that she should smart for having vented her humour upon her. In the meanwhile, Lady Alice's speech had the effect of silencing her enemy, but not for long. Miss Agar saw that her intended victim was looking anxiously towards her father, and longing that his conversation should come to a close; there was no time, she thought, to be lost in giving her a pleasurable doubt to dream upon that night, and bending forward, she said in a low whisper, as if she was afraid of being overheard—

“May I enquire after Lady Howard? I hope she is well. Of course she does not go out, but I trust her health is good; it is so long since I have seen her; it is wonderful if she has retained the original vigour of her constitution after all she has gone through.” And while Lady Alice stared in astonishment, Miss Agar added, in a tone that was intended to imply the deepest compassion, “it was to be expected that she should be sadly changed. Ah, dear Lady Alice! pardon me, it was a fearful step she took; it always makes my heart ache to think of it, and yet, perhaps, I ought not to talk so to you, but I was a great friend of your mamma's, of—of both, in short, and I cannot think of them without infinite regret.”

“Both who?” asked Lady Alice, gasping for breath. “What step?—to what do you allude?—you must be under some mistake.”

Miss Agar hesitated, paused, smiled again.

“Is it possible,” she thought, “they have hid their story from their child till now? What a triumph!” and the idea filled her with malicious pleasure, to think that she should be the *first* person to make her parent's crime known to her.

“I can, perhaps, wither that blooming happy looking creature.”—Strange, that such a demoniac spirit should dwell in woman's form!—“Why, Lady Alice Talbot, I hardly know

how to reply to your question, I have some doubt whether I *ought* to do so, if you are really in ignorance of the affair. I believe it is not fitting that I should undeceive you; only this much I will say, as a friend, do not sacrifice *yourself*,—be very prudent, especially when there is any question of marriage; you will not with your beauty lack lovers; take care that you do not allow them time to be instructed, and strike while the iron is hot!—Good night, fair Lady Alice, remember my words.”

“Stay,” said the latter, “pray explain yourself. I must entreat you would, and I will beg papa to entreat for me.”

“You had better not;—take my advice,” and she was moving away, leaving Lady Alice amazed, and even awed, by her unaccountable conversation; but making an effort to recover herself from the surprise and agitation into which she had been thrown, the former implored her to explain the meaning of her allusions, and particularly of that portion of her conversation which had referred to her mamma.

“Indeed, dear Lady Alice Talbot, seeing how completely you have been deceived, I regret that I have said so much, and must request that you do not press me on the subject further; you look so good, so pure, it is terrible to give *you* pain.”

“I hate flattery, Miss Agar; I shall feel obliged by your leaving out all unnecessary compliments, and answering my question. What do you mean by both?—who are both? What has my mother to do with the nameless person you allude to?”

Miss Agar seemed affected; she hesitated.

“Do not refuse me, I have a right to know the meaning of a discourse which was addressed to me.”

“You are rather wilful, young lady; pardon my frankness, but since you will know, you *must*; yet, ere I comply, reflect; and recollect the nursery story of Blue Beard’s chamber, and the fool-hardy wife, who, in defiance of all warning, would look therein, but did so to her cost. You remember *that*, do ye, lady fair?”

She spoke in her shrill high voice, for Miss Agar, spite the patent she was said to have acquired for remaining young, was rather deaf. People were obliged to speak loud to her, and she returned the compliment in the present instance much to Lady Alice’s annoyance, who was unwilling their conversation should be overheard, but she determined not to quail before her, and and bowing her head, she replied calmly. I am ready to hear whatever you may have to say.”

How often do we set the seal to our own fate ! how often do we speak the word which fills up the measure of our destiny !—sometimes unconsciously, sometimes wilfully, which we had better have left, when in the last case, to the Great Disposer of all events ; but poor human nature is full of infirmity, full of lamentable mistakes even at the best.

Miss Agar addressed Lady Alice, “Know then since it is your determination to know, that your mother was first married to Lord Vernon ; he was a good husband to her, and loved her ; she lacked nothing that his affection and his means could give her. He was very proud of her, poor man ! Ah, pride often comes before a fall. Well, she took to him at first, and conducted herself discreetly, till she fell in love with your father, Lord Howard. Lord Vernon and he were, as is the rule in such cases, you know, my dear, or perhaps, do not know, sworn friends ; it was quite *en règle*. Lord Vernon was the last person to see what the town was talking about and familiar with, as a settled *liaison*, for months previously.

“Well, Lord Stuart was born ; Lord Vernon was fonder than ever of Lady Howard. She had a long dangerous illness after her confinement ; he nursed her for three months consecutively, scarcely taking sufficient rest for his own health’s sake. Lord Howard played the part of second, or rather *first* nurse. Lord Vernon was in person a plain man, though I am one of those who think he has great charms. The gossiping world, you know, my dear, has amused itself at different times, when there was a dearth of news, by inventing stories about him and me ; it’s all nonsense though, except in the way of friendship, except— (and Miss Agar’s looks belied what she uttered,) she wished *they* should. “But your father, Lord Howard, was, and is, a beautiful man. Oh ! but *nem. con.* beautiful. Poor *Lau* ! as I used to call her, could not resist him, and no sooner did she recover her health than she ran off with him. She was always noble, whether acting right or wrong. I do not meddle with that question at present, but noble she was, for she could not bear to go on living in a state of duplicity under her husband’s eyes. I know some folks have made it a question whether it was not better to do so, especially where there was a child in the case, rather than publicly take their *partie*, and make up their mind to run off. Be that as it may, I leave it to others to decide ; Lady Vernon adopted that mode.

“I had seen the whole course of the affair, and I advised her well, Lady Alice, that I did : I said all I could in favour of Lord Vernon ; I told her what she would lose by giving way

to her passion for Lord Howard, and placing an extinguisher upon herself for life; for though some people manage to get through the business wonderfully well, the finger-post, you know, my dear, is set up, and those who run may read; but advice to her was like pouring water through a sieve,—she told me herself it went in at one ear and out of the other. Then again, I tried another point of attack; I named her child, Lord Stuart,—there, do you see him?—he is crossing the ball room yonder. He is not handsome, like his father, but he is charming; it was odd enough, however, she did not love him; the reason, I believe, was simply that he was Vernon's child, and so she forsook both her husband, and her child, and a happy home, and a great position in society, for one of mortification and,—pardon me, Lady Alice, (all men are tyrants,) it is said, for a trying enough life with her lover. He is not so easy-tempered as Lord Vernon; besides, it is plain to see Lord Howard does not bear philosophically the slights he receives on his wife's account, nor the award that is pronounced by society respecting the rights and privileges of a *divorcée*.

“And now my story is done; I have told you all. Do not take it so much to heart: poor child! You are very young, and unused to these things, but they are nothing when one lives a few years in the world. One cannot have one's cake and eat it too, that's certain. Remember Lady Howard got her lover, but she could not keep her husband also; and she has two children whom she doats upon, so she is less to be pitied than many others in her situation; really, considering every thing, she is wonderfully well off. She is not poor, nor dragged down out of her sphere among vulgars. The few persons she does see are of her own *calibre*,—that is a great point; at least, she did not lose her rank in running off with Lord Howard.

“And now, dear Lady Alice, again I pray you to remember, you insisted on my telling you this old melancholy history. I am concerned to have been *the* person who told it you. May I hope you will not cut my acquaintance on account of this circumstance? No one, believe me, felt as I felt for the wrong Lady Vernon did herself, for, after all, it is the poor foolish woman in these cases who suffers. No one told her such truths as I did;—no one sympathizes with you, dear Lady Alice, as I do; indeed, it has affected me to recount this sad story, and rake up all the past again. The past is always melancholy, and as to the future, I do not like to think of it; the present is all I care about. I hope, therefore, you will not hate me for what you have yourself forced me to say, but let me still see you; I

may be useful in your peculiar situation. I should like to see my friend again, some day or another, if Lady Howard felt equal to meeting me. But stay, I have yet one favour to ask; do not, I beg, tell any one that I was the person to divulge this history to you."

Poor Alice! her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth—she could not command utterance. She listened with a determination to hear every word Miss Agar chose to say without interrupting her; but her heart seemed for a moment to cease its action, and then returned to its functions with a sudden bound, which resembled the striking of a hammer on an anvil.

Miss Agar ceased speaking. She looked at Lady Alice; she was afraid she would faint, or fall into hysterics, and trembled at the idea of Lord Howard's finding out the cause of his daughter's sudden indisposition.

Miss Agar's nerves, spite of the laudanum she was in the habit of taking every evening before entering upon her routine of pleasure, were shattered. She began to feel that sinking at the heart, and tottering of the knees, and, above all, the inward tremor which such a life as hers had been, gives, when it seems to be sliding from beneath the grasp. She could not now bear any agitation, such as the fear of detection produces.

The time was past when the vigour of youth braced her nerves to suit the occasion and set detection at defiance. She feared a rebuke from the violent temper of Lord Howard. She took Alice's hand; it was icy cold—It felt stiffly in her own; she opened her smelling-bottle,—she offered it to the sufferer, but Alice shook her head. She was perfectly conscious, and in a short time, the blood, which, for a few moments had been stagnated by the shock she received, rushed through her frame again, and bounded in every pulsation. Her hand grew warm in Miss Agar's; she felt the quick throbbing that succeeded to the former suspension of life.

Alice heaved a heavily drawn sigh. That sigh returned in Miss Agar's ears on her death-bed, with the bitter sting of reproach for having caused it so to heave.

"Yes, Miss Agar, I am not angry; it would be unreasonable to be angry. Oh, my God! how wretched, how very wretched I shall be!" and again her hands fell stiffly on her lap, and she relapsed into silence.

Fortunately, the ante-room in which they were sitting had been forsaken by the crowd, for that, in which the great singer of the day was exhibiting her power.

No one missed Lady Alice. This was odd, considering her

great beauty, and the noise her appearance in the world created; yet scarcely so, either in a London assembly, where one object of novelty after another attracts the gaze of the grown up children who frequent such scenes. Neither was Miss Agar missed; but that was *not* odd. Her well known face, like the link-boys at the door, was sure to be at every festive scene, and it continued to be *supposed* to be there, long after it had ceased to remain above ground.

So then, these two persons, so different in their whole being, were both equally forgotten for the moment by the gay crowd, and not one of those assembled at the Duchess of Clonmell's, on the 15th of May, 18—, knew aught of the misery that was inflicted on Alice Talbot.

Miss Agar, seeing that she did not recover a semblance, even of composed indifference, but remained in a state of torpor, evidently unnatural, said,

“Dear Lady Alice, cheer up: I am excessively grieved to observe how you take this affair to heart. Now receive a word of consolation from the voice of experience.

“Let not this old, gone-by affair of your mother's affect your happiness; true, your appearance in the world, introduced by your father, without any female friend, was injudicious, and drew down odd observations and malignant revivals of your mother's history. If Lord and Lady Howard had consulted me, I am sure I should have been happy to have stood in the gap, and to have done what I could; but some people despise others without sufficient reason for doing so, and very few people know their true friends. However, as I began by saying, do not allow all this to affect your happiness; it is childish to fret over an irremediable evil. Why should you indulge this idle sorrow?”

Alice had lifted up her heart in silent inward prayer, though the near sounds of the Prima Donna's passionate love song, together with the loud applauses which it called forth, rang in her ears, she was deaf to them all. She was as entirely alone as though none of those persons, none of those sounds, had been near her.

It was no irreverence—it was no hypocrisy in her to pray, even in such a scene, and at such a time, for Alice Talbot's heart was a pure and undefiled temple, from whence the incense of prayer might always ascend.

If ever human heart was a fitting altar for communion with Heaven, hers was that heart. She had prayed for power to sustain her under the trial which had thus unexpectedly reached her, and to Miss Agar's worldly consolations she replied,—

"Miss Agar, you and I think very differently on this painful subject,—I wish to drop it. Let it suffice that I exonerate you from all intention to wound me, and from all blame in having made me acquainted with the circumstances of my birth. I shall never disclose that it was from you I acquired such knowledge: trust me, I shall keep this conversation secret in my own breast. None shall ever know that I am acquainted with the fatal truth. It may be the means of coming between me and happiness it may put an end to life itself, but a secret, in as far as it regards me, it shall ever remain, My lips shall never disclose the knowledge of my mother's shame. *She* shall never be humbled before her child; do not be uneasy, I will not break my promise. I am sorry, Miss Agar, that our first acquaintance should have been attended by such untoward circumstances; but I must let the matter rest—I must go home; (she looked at her watch,) it is late, and I promised mamma to be at home early, unless the party was a *very* pleasant one. It has certainly not been that to me; I have no reason to wish to stay. Good night, Miss Agar."

And the unhappy girl held out her hand kindly to the serpent who had destroyed her peace. The latter felt ashamed to take it. What! receive a token of trust and kindness from one she had so cruelly outraged? What! take the hand, and press it, of one whom she had rendered so miserable?

The withered, painted face was convulsed; Miss Agar turned pale through her rouge. Alice was appalled at the sight of the change she saw in her. There is a peculiar horror impressed upon such countenances when the mask of deception drops off.

Miss Agar stood before her like a disinterred corpse; her black eyes, once so famous for their fire and beauty, glared in their sunken sockets with a fixed stare: her whole frame shook; she grasped Lady Alice's arm tightly, or she would have fallen.

The latter was distressed in her turn at seeing the manner in which Miss Agar was struck, on observing the painful feeling of which she had been herself the occasion, and she could not bear that the aged person before her, who ought to have been an object of respect, should become one of ridicule to the young and gay crowd through which she must pass; for Alice Talbot never forgot another's interest, even at a time when her own so painfully employed her thoughts.

"I had not the slightest idea you were ignorant of the story, Lady Alice," she continued, muttering indistinctly as she moved away, "or I never should have told it to you."

“Oh, no! I am sure you would not.—Shall I ask for your carriage?”

“Thanks, thanks; I am better now. A few more drops of laudanum than usual when I go home, and I shall be all right again; these rooms are hot.”

“Yes, very; but will you not go home, Miss Agar?”

“Home,—no; I hate home;” and she laughed an unnatural laugh.

Nothing so melancholy as an unnatural laugh!

“It will not do,” she resumed, “its a dull ending to an evening till sleep is ready to shut up shop and thought together. Oh, no, I am quite well now,—quite awake; I must go on yet awhile,” and opening a small ivory box she took out of her pocket, added,—

“A little of this will varnish the outside of the platter, and as for the in, laudanum will do *that*. It is a duty to look as well as we can to *the last*.”

Perhaps this was the only duty which Miss Agar considered seriously worth attending to. Her words and manner revolted Alice, and the late pity she had excited was converted into contempt.

Lady Alice no longer felt called upon to see that she was conducted in safety to her carriage, and coldly wishing her good night, went in search of her father to take her home. He was in earnest conversation with another gentleman, a great man, one whom Lord Howard was desirous of regaining as a friend, he had been such in former days; but lately, like most others was estranged from him, he found him on *this* evening kind, and entertained a hope that if he could prevail on him to come to Howard House, and himself invite Lady Howard in return, it might afford his wife a chance of being again partially, if not generally received in society. *This* was the great aim of Lord Howard's life.

He was a proud man; he could not bear to find himself sunk in the estimation of the world; above all, he could not bear that his wife should be set apart from her own sex; and however little he had hitherto shown how much he writhed under this sting, still every one who had been intimate with him in former days, well knew what were his sufferings in this respect, and *none knew* this better than he with whom Lord Howard was conversing, when his daughter came up to him.

Lord Howard was aware that the gentleman to whom he was speaking, was all powerful in lifting up, or in casting down, and the conciliatory manner with which the latter had received his advances, encouraged him to give him an invita-

tion to dinner, which he was just going to do, when his daughter interrupted him.

The great man wished Lord Howard a good night, and passed to another room, little suspecting the vexation his doing so at that moment caused his friend.

Lord Howard turned angrily to his child, and asked peevishly, "Why are you in such a hurry to go home? I am not ready yet to do so; go and dance again, Alice, and remember, never interrupt me when you see me engaged in conversation with any one; it is very ill-bred to do so to any person,—to *me* it is very *impertinent*. I desire you will go and dance again, and here Alice," whispering to her, "I request you to be particularly civil to Colonel Leicester; he has been looking for you every where, to dance in the next set as you had engaged to do. He is an agreeable, and a *respectable* man; not like many of the idle dissipated fools who stand gaping at you, Alice. I command you to be civil to him,—remember!"

Lord Howard was a strict man now: well, better late than never, perhaps, but the improvement might have taken place under a better regulated temper. "But where have you been all this time, Alice?" And he looked hard at his daughter. Alice blushed crimson. Her father said, sternly,—

"Well, Alice, answer me, what makes you colour so? where *have* you been and with whom?"

Her confusion increased every moment; she feared her father should guess that she had learned the history of her mother's divorce, but, nevertheless, truth was natural to her. Principle had confirmed her character in all its lucid beauty, and she replied,—

"I have been sitting with Miss Agar, in the blue room opposite."

"Who introduced you to *her*, pray?"

She named the lady of the house.

"I request you will in future avoid further intimacy with her, Alice; she is not an eligible friend; especially not so for *you*. Mind what I say."

"Very well, papa, I shall obey you," and she dropped into a chair that was near, so absorbed in her own painful thoughts, that the music sounded like one indefinite grumbling moan, and the crowd appeared like a mist of shadow, among which no one person was distinguished from another.

Lord Howard, on the contrary, was again engaged in eager conversation with the great man, on whose smile he had rested so many bright hopes. He invited him to Howard House, and the invitation was accepted.

"With much pleasure he would wait on *Lord Howard*," but *Lady Howard* was not named.

The parties bowed, again wished each other good night, and parted.

"Poor Laura!" thought her husband, "she is as though she were dead; the once envied and admired of all beholders is now forgotten, except when her name arouses malignity, or awakens pity; and for whom has she incurred this contempt? for whom does she so meekly bear this life of humiliation and trial?—for me."

Lord Howard's heart reproached him, as he thought "how often have I been unkind to her? how often have I taunted her with the fault that was committed for my sake?"

He almost determined never again to be harsh toward her, but the infirmity of his temper, and even his very love for her, made him relapse into the same conduct. The better a man loves his erring partner, the less can he endure to see her slighted; yet on whom wreak his vengeance? By what right can he resent the thousand slights to which he daily sees or feels her to be exposed? Cruel and unreasonable as it is, it is *not unnatural* that it should recoil upon herself.

Lady Alice felt she should not longer be able to endure the agonizing state of feeling she was in. It was necessary to her, to seek for rest, and self-communion; therefore, she again asked her father to take her home.

"Indeed I am not well, papa; I shall, I fear, make a scene, which you would not wish me to do, unless I am conveyed home immediately."

"Why, child, you have a good colour, you do not look ill! there is something the matter, which you will not tell me."

"Indeed, papa, I am not well; I am in a fever whatever my looks may be, I entreat you to allow me to go home."

"Come along, then," Lord Howard said, taking her arm rather roughly.

Her cloak could not be found.

"Lord Howard's carriage stops the way!" was loudly echoed through the hall, up the staircase, from one servant to another.

"Never mind your cloak, Alice; do come along."

Whilst the attendant maid searched in vain, "Lord Howard's carriage must drive off!" was loudly vociferated; and Lord Howard, who at another time, would not have suffered his darling Alice to stir without being wrapped up, (even unnecessarily so,) now dragged her through the drafts of air, which blew in every contrary direction, without any additional co-

vering to the thin dancing dress, in which she was attired; then putting her hastily into the carriage, ordered the servants to take her home, and return for himself.

He did not even reply to his child's "good night." Wherefore? what cause had he to be displeased with her? There was, in truth, no cause whatever;—but a concatenation of minor unpleasant circumstances bore upon the one great sore point of his existence, and excited his ill-regulated temper, which vented itself upon his unoffending child.

It was the first time he had suffered his bad temper to show itself to her, and poor Alice, overcome with the bitter knowledge she had acquired of her mother's past conduct, was ill prepared to endure this harshness from her father. It completely mastered the restraint she had hitherto imposed upon her feelings; and she cried bitterly and sobbed, as she had not sobbed since the day when her childish friendship with Fanny Harcourt was put an end to. The remembrance of the anguish she had suffered then, returned to her memory.

It is often thus present sorrows recall those which are past, and they seem to start up in all their pristine force, when some recent anguish opens afresh the source of former pain; but in this instance, these sorrows were nearly connected, and merged in one, for the *reason* of her separation from Fanny Harcourt had now become known to her.

"So, then," she thought with that aching throb of anguish which has no name, "my first sorrow was caused by my mother's guilt! She, who has so coaxed and doated upon me, is, in fact, my worst enemy;—so there is an end of my reverence for my parent. I no longer can consider our home as the abode of virtuous love,—no—all the ties which bind us together as a family—which make them my parents—which makes Henry and me brother and sister,—are sinful. We ought never to have existed!—poor, poor mamma! This, then, is the reason she never goes out; this, then, is the reason no ladies visit her, and that my name is so carefully written on the cards which are left at our door. Oh! how my heart bleeds for her disgrace and humbling; how much more should we, her children, be kind to her; how much more does she require our love;—and papa, too, I wish he were never cross to her; *he* ought *not to be* cross to her; for how miserable it must make her, that he, for whom she forfeited all, should be for an instant harsh. This, then, is the reason of her mournful looks; this, then, is the cause of her weeping so often—poor dear mamma! —" and Alice Talbot's heart did indeed bleed.

Could Lady Howard have known the spirit in which her

child entertained the knowledge of her errors, it would have been the sweetest balm to her stricken conscience; for the dread of Alice's growing to love her less, when she should become acquainted with the story of her birth, filled the penitent mother with unceasing anxiety and misery; it was that dread which had made her shrink from telling her daughter with her own lips the melancholy secret. She could have borne the humiliation, but the loss of her child's affection—she shrank from as from death.

Every day Lady Howard made resolves to go to her husband and say, "Now—now I will fulfil my task;" but when the day came—when the subject was broached by Lord Howard, as in the instances already noted down in this memoir, she found some excuse for deferring the avowal, or some entreaty to plead for longer delay.

This task was spared to her. Another's lips had tainted her child's ears and withered its heart by divulging her story; and the high-minded, the devoted child, determined that neither look, or word, or change of demeanour, or the shadow of a shade in her respectful affection, should ever betray to her parent that she was acquainted with the fatal truth.

"No," said Alice, as the carriage drove her into the court of Howard House; "all is changed to me, but I am not changed to my dearest parents. This house is no longer what I have thought it to be. I have attained a terrible knowledge. I shall have to blush for the person who gave me being; but love her,—love them one jot less than before—never! I shall be fonder of her than ever."

When Alice entered her mother's presence it was with perfect composure. The first trial of self-command was over; she did not evince the least agitation, though inwardly there was a tremor like the vibration of an alarum; but she did not even say she was unwell, for she knew Lady Howard's keenness of perception, and that a word, under her peculiar state of feeling, might excite her suspicion. The only shade of difference in her manner was, that, when bidding her mother good-night, the pressure of her hand was more fervent, the kiss more lovingly given. And Lady Howard went to rest, pleased that her child should have met the world's applause, and in ignorance of the sorrow and mortification which had been her bitter portion that night.

Alice Talbot sealed her determination of not seeming to know more than heretofore in solemn prayer. She prayed for strength and help to sustain her in the fulfilment of her duty. She prayed for a continuation of the blessings she had from in-

fancy invoked on her parents' head. She mingled her prayers with the tears of an earnest suppliant. Could such a suppliant plead in vain? Could such a prayer remain unanswered?

CHAPTER IV.

“ Make me not object of the tell-tale day,
The light will show character'd in my brow,
The story of sweet chastity's decay,—
The impious breach of holy wedlock's vow!
Yea, the illiterate, that know now how
To cypher what is writ in learned books,
Will quote my loathsome trespass in my looks.”

SHAKSPEARE'S *Lucretia*.

SOME weeks elapsed, and nothing of a marked character occurred, to alter the daily routine of life of the Howard family, till the unexpected departure of Lord Talbot to the Continent brought on the following conversation:—

“I told you, dearest Laura,” said Lord Howard to his wife, after reading the most touching letter that ever was penned, from their son; “I told you, dearest Laura, that had you only determined to inform him yourself, of what he has now unfortunately learned from a stranger, or at least have allowed me to do so, that you would have spared him half his sufferings, and have avoided knowing that your son is an exile from his country, and may become a stranger to his parents and his home, owing to your injudicious, and, I must add, selfish conduct. At all events, it will be a long time, with his high-wrought and lacerated feelings, before he will return to us. That he should discover the truth was unavoidable; it is only surprising that he should not have done so long ago; had you softened the blow, he would not have felt the humiliation to so great a degree; but to be told by a common acquaintance in a common way, that he was the son of a divorced woman——.”

“Spare me, spare me, Charles, I am sufficiently wretched. Oh! not from you, those horrible words—not from you, most fatally beloved,—from any lips but yours, let me receive the chastisement due to my crime. Oh, my son! could you read your mother's heart, you would not have left your unhappy, doating parents.” And Lady Howard passionately wept.

Whatever might be Lord Howard's ill-temper, his wife's tears generally softened him for the moment—and he endeavoured to comfort and soothe her. He contradicted what he had said

the moment previously, for he was sanguine by temperament, and prone to believe what he wished.

“Henry *will* return to us; his first ebullition of anger and mortification will soften down. He may regret that such *is our* position; but he will not goad his parents with reproaches; *he* will not make us more miserable than we are. He will not long absent himself from the sister whom he so loves, from us whose affections are so bound up in him!”

Lady Howard succeeded in composing herself sufficiently to reply.

“I hope so, dearest; God grant that it may be so!—at all events, if I should not live to see it, he will return *to you*.”

Lord Howard looked in his wife’s countenance inquiringly.

“You should not live to see it? what do you mean? You are a much younger woman than I am a man. You are in health, Laura; why cast such a hopeless gloom over me, as these few words have done?”

Lady Howard endeavoured to smile.

“True, it was wrong, Love mine. I did not think of what I was saying. When one is unhappy, one says many idle things; forgive me, and let us think of Alice. Tell me of her success in the gay world; tell me what hopes you entertain of her being happily married.”

“Laura, our child is exceedingly admired; but I scarcely know whether such beauty, as hers, is desirable for a girl in her peculiar circumstances.”

Poor Lady Howard! even her husband wounded her, constantly, when least intending to do so.

He continued, “Alice’s unquestioned regularity of form and feature, the suffrages of artists, and the unbounded and general admiration of men, will excite envy in the greater portion of her own sex; and it must be confessed, that it is upon the latter that much of a woman’s *peace* depends.—If a girl is pretty, graceful, or accomplished, so are a thousand others, and that degree and kind of charm will be readily conceded to them; but if one start up, as there does, now and then, of a *peculiar* character of beauty, embodying the idealism of poets and painters, she becomes a mark for detraction. Such is our Alice; and not all her ingenuousness, can shield her from danger. But there is one person, whose attentions towards her I have observed, with anxious interest,—I mean Colonel Leicester’s. I think I am not mistaken; this is no passing admiration, no thralldom of the fancy; but deep-rooted attachment.”

“Alas! Charles; Lady Margaret Leicester, the proudest,

and the most immaculate of characters, will not suffer her only son to ally himself to *our* daughter. Had it been any one else, I might have indulged a hope of seeing Alice happily established; but Colonel Leicester never! never! Do not deceive yourself, Charles; do not attempt to deceive me:—above all, do not allow Alice to engage her affections where, I know, they will only be contemned,”

“Your warning comes too late Laura, already Alice loves Colonel Leicester. She is herself ignorant, as yet, of the nature of her preference. But I have watched her, and cannot be deceived. Yet why do you think Lady Leicester will prove so obdurate? After all, Laura, I do not justify the step we took—how can I? but we must despoil the gorgon head of half its terrors; and it is in vain to deny, that there are in the world many such cases, and that they are treated more or less leniently, according to the wealth, the influence, the wide-spreading connections of the parties. Now, *we* being of these black sheep, are among the most fortunately situated in these respects, and we may hope——.”

“Charles, I implore you, speak not so lightly of that which is bowing me down to the very earth. I bore all! I would bear it over again, for your sake!—but oh, not in a bold spirit of braving the opinion of the world; still less in a hardened frame of mind, which defies the anger of an offended God. Can I, then, hear you utter, in a moment of thoughtlessness, (but still in thoughtlessness), sentiments which are not the advised feelings of your more reflective hours; and which nothing could excuse my entertaining, even for a moment. No, Charles, it is a false compassion, that makes you speak thus. I must suffer; it is the lot I have chosen. To evade the consequences of guilt, is to incur a more dreadful punishment still—one, that will not end *here*, Charles! I have never flinched from anguish; you know I have not! only in this last, worst trial—making our children acquainted with the story of their birth. In this instance, as regards our son, I have judged with a false judgment; but I cannot think the same reasoning will apply to Alice. She is a girl. She is never out of our sight. No one will dare to pollute her ears with the account of her parent’s crime. She, at least, is left to me. Charles! Charles! I beseech you, watch over her; let not any malignant tongue whisper the withering truth into her ear.”

Lord Howard promised that nothing should be wanting, on his part, to draw the veil between her, and the knowledge which they so much dreaded her acquiring.

A time of comparative happiness ensued, had it not been for

Lord Talbot's absence, the Howards would have been, for a while, in peace.

Lady Alice, never betrayed herself one moment; and it might be, that she was aided in this difficult undertaking, by having a new interest spring up in her heart, which divided the current of her thoughts.

Colonel Leicester was a very constant guest at Lord Howard's table, and several other men of fashion joined their society.

Lord Howard was in high spirits; something like the splendour of former days seemed once more to irradiate the hall of his ancestors; but every now and then some chance word, some distant allusion to circumstances of a similar nature with his own, dashed the joyous feeling, and he shrunk back within himself, silent and unable to join in the hilarity of those around him.

Not one of these changes took place unobserved by Alice. She was swift to catch every, even the slightest word, that bore reference to the subject of her sorrows, and with the tenderest dexterity she warded off many a random shaft, which would have wounded her parents, had it not been for her anxious love.

The evenings, at Howard House, were passed like those in the country. Lady Alice presided at an old-fashioned tea table, where, as in days of yore, there was opportunity for the exercise of various graces, without any marked display, or apparent pursuit of them.

Women have gained nothing by casting off all domestic cares, and all appearance of taking no part in their household establishment.

There is a peculiar beauty and fitness in women's applying themselves to lend a charm to all the common comforts of life. They know not what power they lose by despising these offices of home-spun texture, but which may, nevertheless, be wove into a web of beauty, and of priceless value to their own best interests.

All men come home *sometimes*. Many men find their chief delight there; even those who do not lead the most regular lives, still seek for repose and refuge under their own roof, and if they find intelligence, good temper, and graceful demeanour, adorning the home scenes of existence, they will gradually be drawn to their fire-sides, not merely as a refuge from trouble and care, but as a delightful arena for the enjoyment of those virtuous pleasures which at once embellish and sweeten life.

These are best practised by women; it is their peculiar pro-

vince to shine at home, and in the quiet paths of domestic life their beams blaze brightest, like the fairy glow-worm's lamp, which shuns the glare of the mid-day sun, and in the calm and sober hour of night, lights the weary traveller on his way.

And it was by her parents' side, in the graceful interchange of those minor attentions, which awaken, without wearying affection, that Lady Alice's personal and mental charms shone out in all their lustre. Colonel Leicester had often followed her flying footsteps in the dance, had gazed upon her youthful dignity of deportment in crowds, alike different from the girlish levity and silly coquetry of the generality of those of her own age, as from the affected Juno airs of a few older stagers, and had always felt that she was a creature innately noble, fresh from the mould of nature; but when he saw her in her paternal home, quietly engaged in the service of others, and performing her task as though it were a choice, and a delight, not a command, he thought that those lines were applicable to her, which he had never before felt inclined to apply to any woman:

“Polite, as all her life in courts she'd been,
Yet good, as she the world had never seen.”

Colonel Leicester was still a young man, though very young ladies might have called him middle aged; and from having lived some time in hot countries, his complexion was darker than nature had designed it to be, as might be seen from the dazzling whiteness of his forehead. Altogether he was a noble-looking being, and the tone of his voice, that powerful spell to win or to repel, was at once manly and harmonious.

Such was the personal appearance of Colonel Leicester, and his mind was formed of such stuff as heroes love to honour. Yet, was he not harsh, unbending, unchristian? No; he had a very woman's tenderness in love, and it was difficult, almost impossible, for any unengaged heart to live long in his society unscathed.

As Lady Howard sat at her tapestry work, her husband engaged at whist, Lady Alice sat by Colonel Leicester, turning over drawings and prints, and listening to his inexhaustible fund of conversation; now discussing matters of taste, with the eye of a painter and the knowledge of a philosopher, and then, when pressed by *her* to do so, touching modestly on those passages of his past life, when his chivalrous bravery had obtained for him the applause of his country, and the marked distinction of every individual who had served with him and under his command.

Was it possible for this sort of intimacy to continue, and not lead to love between two such persons? Both equally superior, both formed for that happiness, as rarely understood as it is rarely found, an entire devotion to each other.

Lady Howard saw this growing attachment with a pleasure mingled with pain. She knew Lady Margaret Leicester's character too well, not to be certain that she would use every argument, every entreaty, to dissuade her son from marrying Alice, and then, what would be the sufferings of the latter, when her affections, already rivetted upon him, should be obliged to be stifled,—uprooted altogether?

Oh how she dreaded for her daughter's happiness! yet she dared not hint this fear to Lord Howard,—it would have driven him wild,—still less to her daughter; and to forbid Colonel Leicester the house altogether, she neither could take upon her to do, for Alice's sake or his own.

“Again,” she thought, as in every occurrence that befel them, “again my child suffers for her parents' fault. Lord Howard's daughter is a match for the highest and the best, but Lady Howard's—it is disgraceful to form an alliance with.”

This sorrow, like many others, she devoured in secret, and only turned in her own mind what would be the best way to separate the lovers, without seeming to do so. There had long been a talk of going to Worthing, on account of her own health, and she availed herself of this excuse to carry her plan into effect.

Lord Howard no sooner heard his wife declare that she felt a change of air to be necessary to her, than he hurried their departure to the sea-side, and, as if there was not a moment to be lost, he ordered his servants to follow, and set off the next day for Worthing.

Alice knew not why, but she felt as if she was leaving every thing she loved, when she left London; and was obliged to recall to mind that her mother had said she was ill, in order to reconcile herself to this departure.

No place can be *less* picturesque than Worthing; but there is always a buoyancy in the air that comes off the ocean which exhilarates the spirits, and seems to give new life. The vastness, too, of the liquid plain, its continual changes of colour of surface supplies the place of land scenery, and excites the imagination, even on such a flat and insipid shore.

Alice felt this: and the wonder-working hand of Omnipotence is perhaps nowhere more powerfully acknowledged than on a level sand, where the rolling billows, toss as they may,

have their fixed boundary, which they cannot overpass, rage and chafe they never so angrily.

Lady Howard pointed this out to her child, who felt it in all its impressive combination of thought. For several days, Alice found aliment for her imaginative mind, in strolling to and fro, gazing on the ocean, and watching a distant sail, as it were, *go down* the horizon to another sphere; but as these sights became familiar, her thoughts reverted to the drawing-room in — Square,—to the quiet evenings, so pleasantly employed in sweet converse, and in the loved presence of one whose absence now made her aware of how much consequence he was to her happiness, and she began to think, after all, it is people, and not place, which constitutes pleasure.

In a musing mood, she wandered inland one day in her walk, to look for the last tints of autumn amongst the few trees which grow in the vicinity of Worthing, and having ascended the only high ground immediately behind the town, she reached a neglected place, which had been a gentleman's country-seat, but was now uninhabited, and considerably gone to decay. The remains of a terrace fronted the house, and in the high walled garden, a few flowers struggled among weeds, and emitted that autumnal fragrance which speaks through the senses to the soul, and awakens a pensive melancholy that carries with it a peculiar charm to the imaginative mind.

Alice wandered up and down, full of quaint fancies, and of that vague reverie, which engenders poesy, till at length her inspiration assumed a form, and she wrote in a small tablet which had been given her by Colonel Leicester, the following verses:—

Unbounded ocean! mighty sea!
Grand image of eternity!
Thy waves outspread, thy dread immense,
Are symbols of that sea, from whence
None e'er return'd to tell the tale,
That o'er it spread death's awful sail;
But from this measureless sublime,
The mind, exhausted, turns to time,
And draws a semblance meet for man,
Connected with his narrow span.

Thy varying surface is the mien
Of this world's state,—a changing scene:
As storm and sunshine hold their reign
Alternate, on the fickle main,
So joys and sorrows lower or smile,
Like these o'erwhelm, like those beguile,

For sunny smiles of joy, that shine
On life,—unstable are as thine.

As on thy vast and dread expanse
The scintillating sunbeams glance;
So pleasure's beams, upon the breast,
Sparkle, but leave no warmth imprest.
And as the Spirit of the air
Darts through the waves its shadows rare,
And changes to an Iris hue,
The ocean's own cerulean blue;

So many a varying thought that springs
From sad review of human things,
Oft clouds the human face divine,
With shades most exquisitely fine:
But not like those, innocuous pass,
That shoot athwart the liquid glass;
For these, with many a heavy trace,
Stamp rugged lines, time can't efface.

Why should the elements supply
Such food for mental agony?
Induce the retrospective eye
To dwell on hours long since gone by;
Weigh o'er the past, recall again,
To pristine force the latent pain,
And with a useless pang assail,
And withering tears, that nought avail.

Even these images suggest
A harrowing thought to tear the breast;
And as the wind or sighs or blows,
So mutably the life blood flows;
Rushes along the swelling vein,
Or back recoils, repell'd by pain,
And to the heart's throne gives once more,
Fresh tides of feeling to deplore:
For nature's realm throughout bestows,
Analogy to human woes,

The scene that now before me lies,
A host of gloomy thoughts supplies;
Whilst thousand idle beings ply
Their happy, dull vacuity.
Why, singled from the general throng,
Should other sense to some belong.
Than that which plods the way of life,
And spares a world of mental strife?
Why not, like them, contented be,
With mediums and monotony?

Theirs is a fatal gift of heaven,
To whom a sentient soul is given ;
The intonation of whose mind,
Is strung by feelings so refined,
That vibrating at every sound,
A very breath has power to wound.
Yes, those who own this gift on earth,
Have a sad guerdon at their birth.
Destined to cherish, though they mourn
The sense, by which their hearts are torn.

Now on the smooth and glittering sands,
Pass, and repass, gay motley bands :
Each sex, all ranks, and every age,
In this dull exercise engage.
Some pace the sands to woo the air,
And shattered nerves or frames repair ;
The only view, the heaving wave,
Gifted with power to heal or save
That life, which mere existence knows,
Where rapture's tide nor ebbs, nor flows,
But which, serenely dull, rolls on,
Till their allotted span is gone.

But I can see another sight
In them, that hope and vigour blight ;
For on thy trackless paths I see,
In fancy's mimic imagery,
Beings by wayward fortunes borne,
Divided loves and friendships mourn ;
Beings, perhaps by sad despair,
To foreign shores for peace repair,
Who find upon thy changing breast,
The record of their woes imprest.
For who, alas ! from self can flee ?
That bitterest human enemy.

Oh, if in mute Oblivion's wave
Their sorrows they had power to lave,
How many, then, would quit the shore,
And to that port return no more,
Where wishes, hopes, and terrors reign,
And thousand phantoms of the brain,
That e'en when real ills subside,
All our fond dreams of bliss deride.

Ah, tell me not of golden gain,
That conquest reaps upon the main :
Ah ! tell me not of battles won,
On waves illumed by glory's sun ;

For in those hoards of wealth I see,
 Degradating Mammon's slavery.
 And in those brine-steeped laurels I
 The briny tears of grief descry.
 In life's realities I view,
 Much to despise, and much to rue,
 And gladly, in ideal joy,
 Seek what realities destroy.

I think, perhaps, did conquest never
 Fond hearts and sweet endearments sever ;
 Did pride of glory, pride of health,
 Ne'er win by force, or gain by stealth.
 The sources of the human soul ;
 But owning nature's soft control,
 Each man contented on the soil,
 Where God first gave his hand to toil,
 Dwelt in the lap of lasting peace,
 That woes with war and sin would cease,
 Then, circled by the ocean's surge,
 No more its awful waves, would urge
 The melancholy thought to rise,
 Nor heave the breast with answering sighs :
 Nothing beyond its bounds outspread,
 Would lure the wandering step to tread ;
 Concentred all within our isle,
 As often in some precious smile
 The whole of life and law resides,—
 For bliss in narrow limits bides,—
 We should not seek on foreign strands,
 One joy beyond our natal lands.
 Then could I think old ocean's flood
 The guardian angel of all good,
 Nor, with dark spirit, gaze, as now,
 I meditate its ebb and flow.

But from this self-created world.
 Where fancy's banners are unfurled,
 I quit the illusory sphere,
 To feel that I am rooted here,
 Here, where at rest, on prison walls,
 The beam of gay illusion falls :
 Here, where vile circumstances bind
 In ponderous chains the soaring mind,
 And where sad truth's effacing hand
 Mars all that's traced by fairy wand.
 Yet something whispers from within,
 "Vain mortal!—to repine, is sin ;"
 Perchance were all these fair conceits,
 Which thus with harmless cunning chea s,

Made real,——then some unknown ill
Would persecute, and wound thee still :
Did pride and luxury never rule,
What would our wayward passions school ?
Humility, the boast, is thine,
By pride's own gorgeous side to shine :
'Tis thine, Simplicity, to sport,
Fairest, where luxury holds her court ;
And mercy's tears most sweetly flow,
As tributary streams to woe.

By every vice some virtue springs,
And every woe some mercy brings ;
Oh! let us humbly then believe.
Our wayward wishes all deceive ;
For who that lives and thinks and feels,
Owns not a power supreme reveals ;
That, gifted for a future state,
The clay-encumbered soul must wait,
Till breaking earthly bonds, it flee
To Heaven, for pure felicity.

Lady Alice read her verses aloud to hear if they were musical, and made several alterations, and then read them again ; they pleased her ; they were a faithful copy of her thoughts ; “but who,” she said, “will care for them now ? My dear brother, he who used to take such interest in I all did, he is estranged from us, and why ?” Alas ! she guessed the reason too well.

This idea brought on a long chain of thoughts, and turned her every feeling into sadness.

“Henry,” she said, speaking half aloud, “Henry, where are you ! you never write to me now ; your letters are short and unsatisfactory even to our parents ; but it is too plain you must have heard our miserable story, and your mind, honourable as it is, could not brook the knowledge.”

Such were Alice's feelings, half murmured aloud, as she descended the knoll on which the garden was situated, when on looking up, she beheld, to her astonishment, Colonel Leicester. They were mutually pleased, but the surprise was all on her part. He told her when the first words of meeting were exchanged, that he had found London very dull, after Lord and Lady Howard had quitted it ; and at last determined to try what change of air would do to remedy the evil.

“The fact is, I believe,” he added, in an agitated manner, and as if the words forced their way against his will, “the fact is, Lady Alice, I should find all places dull now, where you are not.”

This warmth of expression and manner was so unlike Colonel Leicester's usual measured speech and deportment, that it threw Lady Alice off her guard, and she gazed timidly, yet earnestly in his countenance, to know if he were serious or not. There was, as Colonel Leicester interpreted her questioning glance, a degree of reproachfulness in the expression of her features, which made him shrink within himself, and he feared he had said too much; there was a short break in the conversation—both were silent. He spoke first.

“I called at the Steine Hotel, on my first arrival, on Lord Howard, but he and Lady Howard were out. I then inquired for you, Lady Alice, and—and, though I fear contrary to etiquette,—hearing you had walked this way, I followed.”

Still, Lady Alice spoke not; but Colonel Leicester knew she was not displeased at his having infringed this punctilio of etiquette to which he had alluded.

When indeed is it that a man is not aware of the interest he excites? Unwilling, however, to involve her or himself in a more decided explanation of their feelings, and content with the advances he had made in Lady Alice's favour, he started another subject, and spoke of the insipidity of the country, and the uninteresting character of the Sussex Coast, and of matters irrelevant to any personal feeling.

Still, when two persons are drawn together by those invisible chords of sympathy which certainly do exist in despite of all the arguments of cold-blooded reasoners, nothing they can say, nor any subject which they may start, but brings them round again on the same circle, however extended it may be, to the point from whence they set out. The way back to Worthing seemed to them very short, and both thought they should not have been weary could they have prolonged their walk; nevertheless, neither of them proposed to do so, and Lady Alice retired to her room, having taken leave of Colonel Leicester; and there she questioned with herself of his intentions towards her, and her own feelings respecting him. Her ingenuous disposition did not suffer her for a moment to dissemble with herself; she knew that she dearly loved him, but there was an honest pride of conscious worth which made her turn with scorn from the idea of allowing him to read her heart till he had first made known the sentiments of his own.

“Did he love her?—did he not?” then she recounted, in idea, all the things she had ever said; above all, every look he had ever looked, and having summed up the whole, she thought, “Yes, he loves me—but not as I love him. He is weighing not *me* in the balance of his resolve, but my dear

unfortunate parents. He is thinking of the Leicester blood being polluted by that of Lady Howard, *the divorced*. He is thinking of the world's whisper;—the taunt of the insolent,—the sneer of the prudent,—the avoidance of the principled, and thinking of these things, with the inflexible honour of his mother's instructions engraven on his soul, how can I hope to become his wife? Impossible!—it is impossible! But, at least, I will not betray my partiality for him; he shall not suppose I ever indulged a hope that I could win him."

With these resolves, Lady Alice quieted her fears, and resumed the composure which Colonel Leicester's unexpected presence had deprived her of.

She was going to rejoin her mother in an apartment below stairs, which looked on the sea, when her way was completely blocked up by a quantity of trunks, and travelling boxes, that were carrying to the bed-room of some person newly arrived, and immediately followed a lady and her attendant,—the voice of the former, she never could mistake, had she lived a thousand years; it brought back to her the dreadful night, when she learned the secret of her mother's disgrace;—and in another moment Miss Agar addressed her.

Putting up her glass, she said "Bless me! Lady Alice Talbot! who would have thought to meet you in this place? Well, I am very glad to have the pleasure of seeing you. I trust you are quite well;—and, is Lord Howard here?" and then lowering her voice,—“and your mamma, is *she here*?—in this house?"

"Papa and mamma are both with me, of course."

"Well, I am exceedingly sorry that it should so happen at this moment; but I am afraid it will be out of my power to cultivate your society, as I should have wished, under other, circumstances; for you know, my dear," and she put her mouth close to Lady Alice's ear, "I am here with Lord Vernon, so that I could not, without giving offence to my oldest and best friend, visit Lady Howard; but I am glad you told me of this circumstance, for I think I must look out for other apartments.—Good morning, Lady Alice," and she called to her servant, to give orders about her travelling paraphernalia, during which, Lady Alice made her escape.

She trembled violently, at this rencontre, lest Lady Howard should hear of it,—lest she should be led to enquire into the particulars of her having made Miss Agar's acquaintance,—and lest, worst of all, they should meet Lord Vernon and his son.

It was some degree of relief to her, to hear Miss Agar dis-

putting with the landlady, about the sum she was to pay for the apartments which she had bespoke, and now declared she could not inhabit, and finally, after much wrangling, beheld her get into her carriage and drive off.

Still, Lady Alice knew these persons were at Worthing, a place so confined in extent, and so calculated to make all who sojourned there meet together, that she scarcely dared to hope such a dreaded interview might not ensue. Yet, to whom could she open her heart? To whom express the misery that it was her peculiar lot to bear, in unshared wretchedness? For the moment, there was a pause—a breathing time; and she availed herself of it to assume her wonted cheerfulness before her mother.

“Have you had a pleasant walk, dearest child, this morning?” said the mother, as she entered the room, where she was sitting.

“Yes, very; and I had an agreeable surprise, mamma, in meeting Colonel Leicester.”

She tried to still the accelerated motion of her heart, as she spoke; but Lady Howard knew her child too well to be deceived; she would not, however, take any notice of the agitation, which she remarked with all a mother’s interest; and more than most mothers’ apprehensions for the consequences that might ensue to her, who was dearer to her than her own life.

She had not, however, leisure to probe her daughter’s feelings, at that time, even if she had been inclined to do so, for Lord Howard and Colonel Leicester came in together.

“Laura, I have met our friend wandering about, apparently not knowing what to do with himself, and in despite of his many apologies, I have brought him to dine with us.”

Lady Howard professed her pleasure at seeing Colonel Leicester, and with the tact so peculiar to women, she put him quite at his ease, and took off all the awkwardness, which he felt, in endeavouring to explain, (which was quite unnecessary), why he had come to Worthing, and why he was not going to make a long stay, and much other gratuitous information, which only served to discover that which he was endeavouring to conceal.

Lord Howard was in high spirits, and even Lady Howard caught some reflection of gaiety from his joyance.

His child too, was for the time happy; nevertheless, these four persons were in their different positions, playing a part; not from any sinister design; on the contrary, from motives which were in themselves amiable, and even laudable; and yet,

had they laid aside all disguise towards each other, they would have better fulfilled their relative duties, and had a fairer chance of happiness.

CHAPTER V.

“ Had I a cave on some wild distant shore,
Where the winds howl to the waves’ dashing roar :
There would I weep my woes,
There seek my last repose
’Till grief my eyes should close,
Ne’er to wake more.

BURNS.

A FEW days after the foregoing re-union, a circumstance occurred, which again cast a shadow over the temporary gleam of enjoyment of the Howard family. They were walking on the beach, Alice leaning on Colonel Leicester’s arm, and Lord and Lady Howard following them at a short distance. Lady Howard discerned two figures approaching them, at whose sight she turned sick at heart,—her footsteps tottered,—she grew deadly pale.

“ What is the matter, Laura ? ”

“ Nothing, nothing,” she replied ; “ but let us join Alice and Colonel Leicester ; ” and Lady Howard endeavoured to hurry on to a bench, on which her child and Colonel Leicester had just sat down.

The persons she had seen coming towards them advanced nearer,—one moment more, and they must pass close to them. Lady Howard cast a glance at them to assure herself of that which she most dreaded to ascertain. She was not mistaken.

Then that terrible burning blush, which was the reflection of her upbraiding conscience, flushed her cheek and forehead with its scorching glow.

Lord Howard looked also in the same direction as his wife had done, and immediately recognized the cause of her agitation ; he beheld Lord Vernon and *his* son,—Lady Howard’s son,—who were about to pass close by them. Lord Howard turned his back, and pretended to look at a vessel in the offing ; Lady Alice spoke eagerly to Colonel Leicester, and endeavoured to take off his attention from her mother ; but, unfortunately, both Lord Vernon and Lord Stuart were intimately acquainted with Colonel Leicester, and the latter, in ignorance of Lady Howard being his mother, rushed forward, and eagerly seizing

Colonel Leicester's hand, he expressed the pleasure he felt at thus unexpectedly meeting him. Lady Howard looked up at Lord Stuart,—his likeness to his father, mingled with a likeness to herself, and that indescribable yearning of nature towards an offspring, which every mother knows, told her that he was her child—her *first-born* and forsaken son. Her eyes were involuntarily rivetted on him, but she saw Lord Vernon advancing, and she dared not longer indulge her gaze. She withdrew them, and looked on the ground.

Lord Vernon stared hard at the party on the bench, to ascertain who the persons were his son was speaking to. He immediately recognized Colonel Leicester, and supposing them to be strangers, he too stopped, and addressed the latter

Poor Lady Howard! she had not even a veil on, to cover that burning blush of shame which burnt her like a firebrand, She felt ready to sink at Lord Vernon's feet,—at her son's feet—(oh! what an unnatural humiliation is a parent's to a child!) and implore their pardon; but Lord Howard's presence was a check to her feelings, the only one perhaps, which could have had power to make her refrain from exclaiming,

“Oh, my son, my son!”

Lord Vernon caught a glimpse of Lady Howard's averted face; their eyes met; and hastily withdrawing his hand from Colonel Leicester's he walked rapidly past them. Colonel Leicester contrived to lead Lord Stuart to some little distance from the Howards, for he knew too well the unfortunate situation of Lady Howard, and of her being the mother of his young friend; and with that delicacy of feeling which was so peculiarly his characteristic, he returned a few steps, held out his hand, first to the poor mother, then to Lady Alice, and saying that he had some particular business with Lord Stuart, wished them a good morning; but the latter came forward, as though he were about to request to be introduced to Lady Howard and her daughter; this, Colonel Leicester adroitly prevented; but Lord Stuart looked hard at them, and bowed as his friend took his arm and led him away. Alice returned the curtesy; she did not wish her mother should think that she was conscious of any peculiarity in her doing so to Lord Stuart, more than to any other man.

What refinement of tenderness, guided by presence of mind! what scrupulous attention to her parent's feeling! But Lady Howard's knees shook under her; she could not return the bow—the bow from her own son!

After this unexpected and terrible meeting she looked at Alice; she did not betray any surprise at Lord Vernon's ab-

rupt manner of passing by them, or seem in any wise affected by the scene.

Thus had the innocent girl acquired a profound power of dissimulation, the attribute, generally, of hardened characters, and seldom the companion of ingenuous youth. The seed sown by the parent, be it bad or good, multiplies ten thousand fold to the children's children.

"Thank God!" said Lady Howard inwardly, "Alice is yet ignorant of her mother's shame, but both my sons are estranged from me. Henry flies his home, because he knows it is one of guilty love; and William is not even aware that I am his mother. His manner to me, when chance threw us together, was that of one indifferent person to another. No; he does not even know me when he sees me. Ought I to wish he should? Vernon, you are revenged! The iron has entered into my soul!"

There is a feeling excited in the breast of a mother at the birth of her first-born, which is as unlike every other in its nature, as it is permanent and engrossing; and however much after-circumstances may estrange the parties, the exulting pleasure with which the first-born was hailed by its mother, can never be entirely effaced from the memory; and great as was Lady Howard's affection for the two children of the man she loved, nevertheless, when she beheld Lord Stuart, she remembered he was her first-born,—she had forsaken him,—she had injured him, and a long repressed flood of overwhelming tenderness, such as can be felt alone for one that is most dear and most injured, now burst forth, and nature claimed her right.

All these thoughts and feelings, so long to detail in language, so rapid to be felt by the affections, had occurred to Lady Howard during the brief scene which has been delineated.

When she roused herself from the stupor which succeeded these sensations, her first thought was of Lord Howard. She looked round in search of him, but he was gone, and the mother and daughter were alone together.

"It was unkind in *him* to leave me, and at *such* a moment," she felt, but did not say so! "Howard ought to have stood by his wife; but no one has done so, save Alice!" and the sensation of desolation bowed her to the earth.

She continued to sit for some time on the bench on which she had fallen, till Lady Alice observed that it was growing late,—that she feared that the damp mist which was gathering over the sea would hurt her, and she requested her, in an anxious tone of voice, to go home.

Lady Howard rose without speaking, took her child's arm, and they returned to the inn in silence.

Each had a secret to hide from the other,—each endured that heavy sense of oppression, which weighs upon all who have something to conceal.

When Lord Vernon returned home, it was with a heavy heart and a renewed sense of misery and sorrow, long gone by, but freshly brought again to his endurance. His old friend and cousin, Miss Agar, who had rendered herself so necessary to him, that she had at length succeeded as establishing herself as mistress of his house, was ready to receive him as he entered.

“How now, my lord!” she said, as he walked up and down the apartment, “what's the matter? don't let the blue devils get hold of you. I do not fear the face of clay, but those shadowy monsters must be combated stoutly, or they'll get the better of us.”

“Why, who do you think I've seen, Miss Agar?”

“How should I know! some very ugly old witch, one would suppose, by your strange humour.”

“I have seen Lady Howard. I have seen Laura Vernon, that was. By heavens! she is still the handsomest woman in England, even now. Laura! my poor Laura! I am sorry to have seen you—it makes all my misery return.”

“Bless me, my Lord, is that all!—What! you have seen your runaway wife, and you relapse into lover-like despair, after thirty years of forgetfulness. I pray you, have more respect for yourself—more common sense.”

“Poor soul! Lord Vernon went on to say, speaking as it were to himself; “Poor soul! I fear that proud fellow, Howard, is not as kind to you as he ought to be. Not as kind as I should have been to you. It is hard for a man to be deceived by the woman he doats upon, and by a man calling himself his friend, as Howard called me. Yes, it is a black story,—but the worst of all was, her having had the heart to forsake her boy. Laura! I could have forgiven my own wrongs, but my son's——.”

And Lord Vernon's heart writhed with the contending feeling of long-forgotten love renewed, and a sense of injury, coupled with that love.

It is impossible but that an injured husband, who finds the man who sat at his board, eat his bread, and lived on terms of the greatest intimacy with him, prove basely false to him, and not for ever entertain a lively remembrance of such treachery; and though Lord Vernon had the spirit of a christian, and

proved he had, still he felt as a man,—and he gave vent to these feelings on the present occasion, and expressed them in all their poignancy.

“My dear Lord Vernon,” said Miss Agar, who was beating the Devil’s tattoo, with sundry other gestures of impatience, “these ebullitions of wrath and regret are really beneath contempt. Why, you talk like a young boy quite raw and new upon the world. Is it not allowed by all,—is it not *selon les règles*, that my Lord’s greatest friend, is my Lady’s lover? There was nothing new or astounding in your case. Fifty persons are in the same predicament now, so to speak, on the boards of public life.—Some of these affairs are beginnings of future denouements; some are in progress; others nearly completed. These arrangements or disarrangements, or whatever you may choose to call such choices and chances,—always have existed, and do exist: and as to what may be, in future, you and I need not much care. Take my word for it, the greatest crime in the eyes of the world, is to be ridiculous. Hitherto you have escaped that misfortune; do not incur it; rest assured, there is nothing new under the sun, and do not arrogate to yourself the glories of a martyr. Your story is the commonest one in the world—vexatious at the time, doubtless, but more, or less so, as you yourself make it. *Bonne mine à mauvais jeu*, is the wise axiom, and one upon which you will go on well through life; the reverse is a pitiable affair. However, my dear friend, you know I have always stood by you, and will, to the last. I have no great faith in women’s friendships, but a friendship between a man and woman, especially when they are not in their first bloom, is one of the surest *liaisons* I know of.”

“Miss Agar, it is true you have often borne with my weakness, if you choose to call it so, and I am grateful for your kindness, and amused by your many talents. But I will not attempt to conceal from you, that there are some deep-rooted feelings, of which it may truly be said, they are a part of ourselves—and of such are those which are connected with my unfortunate marriage; but not a word more,—here comes Stuart and Colonel Leicester.”

It was decided by the Howards to leave Worthing, and proceed to Brighton.

Lord Howard had been in very bad temper since the unfortunate rencontre, and his bland humour had given place to much unreasonable querulousness.

He observed to his wife “that Colonel Leicester, for the last two or three days, had not dined with them as usual,”

and said "he supposed that vile woman, Miss Agar had seized upon him, to make up her whist party."

The day before they were to go away, Lady Alice wished to make a sketch of some boats, and fishers' tackle, which lay on the shore, immediately before the bench where she had sat by Colonel Leicester, on the eventful day when she had seen Lord Vernon, and her brother.

She had a fear, and yet a wish to see the latter once again, and she was desirous, at all events, of taking some remembrance of the day when she had seen him, it might be, for the first and last time.

She went out very early, to avoid the anxious gaze of the passengers, so that she drew undisturbedly, and made a clever sketch,—some bold clouds serving for a back ground, together with the tints of early morning, and the picturesque group of boats in the foreground, lent a tone and character even to the pencil drawing, that gave it almost the effect of colouring.

Having finished, she prepared to return home in time for her father's breakfast hour, when she saw a person approaching, whom she immediately recognised as Lord Stuart. She wished to remain;—she wished—she knew not what. But could her mother, or Lord Howard desire that she should make his acquaintance? Oh no! they could not;—and hastily scrambling all her drawing materials into a basket, she moved homeward, although unwillingly.

She had not gone far, before she heard some one running behind her, and then her own name, Lady Alice, called repeatedly.

"I beg your pardon, but I believe you have dropped this book," holding up the tablets which Colonel Leicester had given her.

She stopped, and thanking Lord Stuart, had leisure to look at him, and her heart longed to call him brother; while on his part, something seemed to attract him, also, and he endeavoured to lengthen out the conversation, by assuring her that he had not looked at the contents of the tablets—merely taken up the little book that confined them, which, he said, "he concluded to be her's as he had seen her for some time drawing from the bench where he had found them."

She coloured, smiled, hesitated, was embarrassed, and then giving way to an impulse she could not well define, she said, "I have no secrets. You are quite welcome to look at the contents, and not only to look at them, but to keep the book altogether; pray do so! I give it you. Keep it in remembrance of this day!"

Lord Stuart took the gift, with much emotion. He knew not what should make him thus interested in a stranger.

“Will you, Lady Alice, pardon me, if I request to know whether I may not have the pleasure of considering your kind condescension as a permission to call upon Lord and Lady Howard, and cultivate your acquaintance.”

“Oh, dear! Lord Stuart, I know not—I cannot say—I fear not. Oh! do not ask me. I believe your father and mine quarrelled. They can never meet. But do not, as you value my peace, do not say any thing of this our accidental acquaintance. I trust to your honour. In our prayers we may remember each other.” And she walked hastily away.

The more she thought of this interview, of her imprudence, in having given way to the wish of her heart in saying something to her brother,—the more distressed she was, and the more angry with herself; and yet, she could not altogether repent of having left a memorial of her existence, with a relation she might never see again.

On his part, Lord Stuart did not know what to think. He wondered what quarrel could have taken place between his father and Lord Howard. He wondered how Lady Alice Talbot should know any thing of the matter; and still more, he wondered why she had said, “I trust to your honour, not to mention this our accidental acquaintance;” but on the other hand, he could not think himself bound not to fathom this mystery, and he determined to speak to Colonel Leicester, who he knew was intimate with the Howards.

He did so; and the latter was at first thrown off his guard, and was just going to say all he knew, when his usual caution checked him, and he replied, “I cannot answer you, Stuart, I believe I have heard, that long ago there was a quarrel between your family and Lord Howard, and that they never met. But I was not in England at that time, I was with my regiment. Only tell me, did Lady Alice give you these tablets?”

“Yes, just as I have related it to you—so was our meeting. But why do you ask that question, with an appearance of so much interest? Are you jealous, Leiceister?”

“Jealous, no!—impossible!” he added gravely, “but let me read the lines that are written in them.”

“These are not the sentiments of so young a person as Lady Alice, surely,” said Lord Stuart. “They appear to be the feelings of one who has suffered much of the pains and realities of life.”

“It is not always youth, or age, which ripens the understanding,” replied Colonel Leicester, “and gives force to expres-

sion. Some people live more in a very few years, than others do in a long life. I agree with you, in thinking the verses good—better than most women's poetry; but what makes me feel an interest about them is, that they seem to have been written from the heart, and the heart which could dictate them, must have known many sorrows."

"Well, it is very hard I am not to cultivate the acquaintance of a person who appears altogether so delightful. I will, positively, find out what this quarrel was between our parents; and endeavour to break the spell which seems destined to prevent our becoming friends."

Colonel Leicester was, at all events, pleased that he had not been the person to tell Lord Stuart that his mother was a divorced woman. He had been educated in a very strict school, and the natural bent of his mind was calculating. This did not altogether choke the warmer feelings of his heart, but it very much repressed them; and hitherto his affections or passions had never run away with his judgment.

He began to question himself as to the propriety of continuing on terms of such great intimacy with the Howards, and he asked himself whether he would or would not marry Alice Talbot. He thought of her beauty, of her virtues, of something perhaps which to his own peculiar turn of mind, was more enthralling still,—of that uncommon power of intellect, which always commanded his homage, even when unaccompanied by outward charm, but which, united to youth and beauty, proved a combination as rare as it was irresistible; but then he thought of Lady Howard's unfortunate position; of his own mother's unbending virtue, and prudence crossed his wishes. He determined to conquer his attachment; to cease from an intercourse which would be as dangerous as it would be dishonourable. But how to break through this intimacy, was his next thought; and he liked to suppose it more difficult than it really was; but all his perplexities on this head were settled by finding when he called the next day, that the Howards were gone to Brighton.

It is astonishing how the wisest and best principled persons deceive themselves. "Gone to Brighton!" he said to the maid servant, who spoke to him at the Steine Hotel; and he turned away moodily, and walked along the shore. At first he resolved to return to town and join his mother in Devonshire; but then he thought "why should I not go to Brighton? every body goes to Brighton,—my going *there* can lead to no consequences, can excite no surprise; no busy tongues will be observant of me *there*; *here*, indeed, the place is so confined,

the society so small, everything and every body is noticed and commented upon; but Brighton!—who knows what any body does at Brighton? Besides, I need not to be perpetually with the Howards!" These and a thousand other reasons which had no reason in them, determined him to follow his own inclination; and to Brighton he went.

The first persons he met were the Howards; they were coming down Broad-street, just as he was passing it to go to Kemp Town.

Lord Howard, in his kind familiar way, immediately recognised him, and as quickly gave him a general invitation to dine whenever he should have nothing better to do. Somehow or other, he seldom had any thing better to do; and in despite of his good resolves to avoid the family, he found himself living perpetually with them.

Lord Howard seldom or ever went into any of the societies which, that particular year, abounded; and, as his daughter declared she had no wish to join them, he felt at liberty to decline all those invitations that came to him and Lady Alice. But there was *one* invitation he did wish to have, and that came not. He had written his name down, and his daughter's, at the Pavilion, but no notice whatever was taken of him or of Lady Alice. He felt this bitterly, and there was one person, his friend, *the great man*, to whom he did venture to express the slight he felt; but from whom he received a reply so polite and unanswerable, that he was conscious he had only to bow to the award. "If," said this personage, "you and your daughter were invited, would it not be the most cruel affront upon you both, since Lady Howard could not possibly be received, and as she is known to be with you here, surely that would wound your feelings more than any thing else could do."

Lord Howard made no reply; something galling met him at every moment when he least expected it, in some shape or other; thus Brighton became detestable to him.

Lord Howard felt himself a marked man, go where he might; but London is large enough even for such a one to escape daily and hourly observation; there is no place where one is so soon forgotten; it is either the busiest or the most retired scene in the world. Upon the whole, therefore, Howard House was the shelter of refuge best adapted to his circumstances, for his house in the country had been unfortunately the place they had fled to when Lady Howard left Lord Vernon. Their story was too well known there; the honest farmer, and the country squire's wife, even to the lowest pea-

sant on his estate, pointed his wife out as a warning to *their wives* and children. This also was a bitter trial to Lord Howard. He could boast of a long line of unsullied ancestry, and hitherto had had an honest pride in enumerating their deeds and emulating their virtues. Lady Howard had become a blot in his escutcheon; she was the first bearing that name who was a disgrace, and it was not one of his least mortifications to think that her portrait could not take its place, beautiful as was her outward form, in that long range of peerless dames, in comparison with whom her image would draw down the scornful comments of all beholders.

The particular feature in Lord Howard's character had been a veneration and love for his progenitors; nor was it merely pride that guided this feeling, but an honourable sentiment, which, in recounting their exploits, said, "Go thou and do likewise."

These are thoughts and feelings little regarded in the present day; but it is very silly, nay, worse than silly; it is one of the dark signs of the times, not to busy ourselves about the histories, the conduct, and the characters of our ancestry.

Wherever there is no love of, or care about, those who have gone before us, there is little emulation, or excitement to virtue, or heroic action left; little dread of what is evil, or admiration of what is good. It is a flippant vulgarity, in the character of *Charles*, in "The Rivals," to make it appear as if it were an admirable trait in him to sell his ancestor's portrait at an auction; as though this were the characteristic of a gay, high-spirited fellow, rather than of a vicious fool: but Sheridan had no ancestors, I believe—he was himself his own ancestor, as an Irish body may say. The scriptures, themselves, even seem to warrant and inculcate an interest in the character of those from whom we sprang, since the promise is made of a blessing even to the thousandth generation of those who love God, and think upon his commandments, to do them—and the reverse.

Although Lord Howard was happy to see his wife's health somewhat restored by their stay at Brighton, and that Lady Alice was generally attended in her rides by Colonel Leicester; still he was so mortified at being shut out from the court, that he determined to return to town, and after a few weeks was again settled in Howard House.

But how much of happiness or misery may be comprised in a few weeks.

Lady Alice had unconsciously allowed herself to consider

Colonel Leicester as a friend, and in despite of all her wisdom, the friend had become a lover.

In gazing at the setting sun, as it sank beneath the horizon, the last night of her sojourn at Brighton, she thought it might never again rise for her with the same gladness; and as though nature itself marked the hour with a peculiar characteristic, for remembrance to dwell upon, the scene was gorgeous in glory.

Every one knows, who is an observer of nature, that the circumstance of the whole interest of a sun-set at sea being exclusively and undividedly confined to the heavens and the ocean, no minor feature of landscape breaks the unity, or draws off the eye to any less sublime object.

It was one of those evenings, when the gold and purple clouds seem like a canopy around the retreating orb of fire, while a thousand tints of palest hue, and of indescribable beauty, form, as it were, a soft back ground to the splendid gold of the sun's upward rays. The waves were dark beneath it, save where they caught a stream of coloured light from the reflection above them.

Lady Alice and Colonel Leicester reined in their horses to admire this sight, after a quick gallop over the Downs.

"I never knew," said the former, "how beautiful Brighton was, before. I am quite sorry to be leaving it just as I had learned to taste its charms."

Colonel Leicester observed, with an emotion of voice, which adds so much pathos to words, "It is the sun only, Lady Alice, which produces this magnificent effect;—obscure it, and how dull and uninteresting would this shore become. And so is life—if the sun of our affections ceases to irradiate us, the prospect is dreary indeed!"

Lady Alice made no reply.

Lord Howard called to them, saying it was time to get home, and they pushed on their horses and joined him.—A few more minutes brought them there.

Lady Alice endeavoured to behave as usual, to seem the same; but at dinner, that day, she was abstracted, serious; and when asked for one dish, helped the person to another.

She wished, but feared, to look in Colonel Leicester's countenance, and to read there the purport of what he meant; but she never had courage to fix her eyes steadily upon him.

She felt—for *it is a second sense of sight*—that he was looking at her, perhaps, with the same intent, and she dared not trust herself to the expression which she knew her heart would make to his inquiring eyes.

This bitter-sweet of love was hers; but he knew every thing that she fancied she was hiding from him.

The fable of "the Boys and the Frogs," is but too apt an emblem of the passion of love, as it regards women,—it is death to them, but play to their pursuers.

CHAPTER VI.

"From mighty wrongs to petty perfidy,
Have I not seen what human things could do?
From the loud war of foaming calumny,
To the small whisper of the paltry few,
And subtler venom of the reptile crew,
The Janus-glance of whose significant eye,
Learning to lie with silence, would seem true,
And without utterance, save the shrug or sigh,
Deal round to hapless fools its speechless obloquy."

BYRON, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

LADY Margaret Leicester was sitting in her room, in Grosvenor Street, one afternoon, apparently absorbed in her work, which however required no great skill or stretch of understanding, awaiting the visit of Miss Agar, a person for whom she had no great respect; nevertheless, she paid her that sort of attention which the frivolous sometimes obtain from the profound, the wicked from the virtuous, and the unprincipled from the principled. It is really very difficult to account for this strange fact, but that it is so, no person who has lived long in the world will deny. Is it that the good and the respectable are deceived? no, it is not that either;—is it that they receive such persons courteously out of a pure spirit of philanthropy, and in the hope of doing others essential service, and reclaiming them? no, it is not that either. It must be confessed it is rather from that unamiable, but governing spirit which pervades all human character; a spirit of selfishness, that these anomalous intimacies take place for a time, while under the influence of some strong excitement, some particular point of interest they serve. The really superior will, on certain occasions, condescend to hold communion with very doubtful and even reprehensible characters; and so it was with Lady Margaret Leicester, the afternoon in question, as she sat expecting to receive Miss Agar.

The usual note of preparation was loudly given at the door:

there is surely something in the knock which announces a visitor, that implies what sort of person they are.

Miss Agar's was short, but peremptory. Certainly it had a great resemblance to herself.

"I hope I have the honour to see you well, my dear Miss Agar; allow my servant to put down your shawl."

"Indeed, Lady Margaret, I am *pretty* well; quite well is not exactly what I am, or what I should like to say, if I were so. I have a superstition about 'quite well.' I never allow any body (I care about, that is to say), to be *quite well*."

"What a good idea that is! why, really Miss Agar, when one considers the uncertainty and the brevity of every thing here below, we ought not to speak so decidedly; as you well observe, no body's quite well, or quite good, or quite any thing; *that* belongs not to our imperfect state."

"My dear Lady Leicester, as for your morale upon the subject, I confess myself not good enough certainly to have meant any reference to it, but merely *à propos en l'air*,—a fancy, a folly, anything you will, in short."

Lady Margaret drew up, and looked grave, poked the fire, shook her head, which Miss Agar did not observe, and went on to say—"Talking of follies, what do you think? Lord Howard was so unwise as to court a rebuff, and a rebuff from the *Court* too! He took his divorced wife, and his daughter, Lady Alice, under the very nose of royalty;—could any thing be more injudicious?"

"Very terrible, indeed! people have so little respect for any thing, or any body, that I have ceased to wonder at, although I can never cease to lament them."

"Lament! that is a great word on a small occasion, why you may do nothing then but cry, from the rising up of the sun to the going down of it; besides, there are some actions quite sure to produce certain consequences there is nothing to be hoped or feared about the matter, still less to be lamented; for when a man has married a divorced woman, he knows she cannot be received at court, and at best is only smuggled into society, like a piece of contraband goods; it is pitiable to see poor Lord Howard, striving and striving to edge his wife in, and never succeeding. I am sure I am very sorry, for I declare I think that poor woman is very much to be pitied, and is not half so bad as fifty others to whom we all make our best curtsies every day."

"I beg you will not say *all*, Miss Agar: I never was, I never will be acquainted with a doubtful character."

"That is to say, not that you know of, Lady Margaret. But

pray, are you gifted with the spirit of divination to read people's hearts? You are more terrible than I thought you were. If this is the case, I should not dare to appear in your presence."

"Eh! eh! eh! eh!"—laughed Lady Margaret, or rather tittered, for the peculiar sort of noise she made resembled more a rattle than a laugh.

"You are always witty, always droll; it is impossible to be angry with you;—but it is one thing to jest—another to be in earnest.—And so the unfortunate Lady Howard was cruelly affronted at Brighton? No one lived in their society, did they?"

"Oh! pardon me, they had plenty of society. Your son Colonel Leicester was never absent from them,—never seemed happy where they were not, that is to say, where Lady Alice Talbot was not."

"You don't say so. What! Leicester frequent their society? You astonish me!"

"*I wonder that you should wonder, Lady Margaret. You and I have lived long enough to wear off all the novelties of life. Wonder is a young fresh sentiment, it suits the inexperienced; but it is very tiresome to meet with a person who goes on through life wondering constantly; however, in this case, even you are deceived, and I suppose you thought your son was always to be tied to your apron string, fulfilling your commands;—when you find the reverse, you wonder.*"

"I should be exceedingly sorry indeed, Miss Agar," replied Lady Margaret, colouring with anger, "to have ever indulged such a supposition. George Leicester has too much character to suffer himself to be led by any one,—not even by his mother."

"Ah! perhaps so; but by a mistress you know that is a different affair; the wisest of men are the puppets of their mistresses. Some said he was in love with the mother,—some said with the daughter. What a lovely creature Lady Howard was when Laura Vernon. I was very intimate with her at that time. I had known her mother, and I gave her the best advice. I told her she would repent of the step she was about to take. But advice is the most useless thing in the world. However, I dare say she will marry her daughter well. These divorced women always do. I should not at all be surprised to see Lady Alice Talbot become Lady Alice Leicester."

"God forbid!" most devoutly ejaculated Lady Margaret;—"My son! my excellent son marry a girl whose birth is——"

"Make up your mind to it, for I really believe the match

will take place, and after all, let me tell you, no bad match either; her father intends to give her a very large fortune: she has been well brought up, is exceedingly handsome, and ——”

“Well brought up! My dear Miss Agar, where theory is not grounded upon practice what signifies all the lessons got by rote of virtue. The girl must know the secret of her mother’s crime, and that, in itself, is quite sufficient to render her wholly unfit to become the wife of my son. No, Miss Agar, George Leicester would not break his mother’s heart. But I need not indulge such vague apprehensions; the thing is I know quite out of the question. Only I pray you just mention the reports which the idle and the envious disseminated respecting his supposed attachment. Really I hate to pronounce the word, it is so inconsistent with every principle that has ever been instilled into his breast.”

“I assure you, Lady Margaret, that the fact of your son’s living morning, noon, and night with the Howards, first at Worthing, then following them to Brighton, and repeating the same conduct there, was well known to every body, and of course the world supposed that he was in love either with one or the other of the ladies.”

“The world is very scandalous, very wicked. Alas! my dear Miss Agar, we are all very wicked, but let us hope that some persons are better than others.” And she dropped her eyes complaisantly upon her lap.

“Indeed, I don’t hope any thing about the matter; it is quite enough for me to think of myself, and too much too sometimes. But, bless me!—looking at her watch,—I promised to set down that tiresome Lady Crawley, who has no horses, and always makes use of other people’s. It is past the hour we had agreed to go to Lady Napier’s assembly. Good night, my dear Lady Margaret. I have the honor to wish you a very good evening.—I have given her some nice nuts to crack,” she said mumbling as she hopped down stairs.

That evening, when Miss Agar thought she had thus filled up the compliment of her day’s mischief, and that Lady Margaret sat turning over every possible reason for and against the probability of her son’s being enamoured of Lady Alice Talbot; the object of all her maternal solicitude had come to the determination of proving how far Alice would sacrifice the love she bore her mother to that with which he had inspired her. Colonel Leicester’s character was not an uncommon one with the male part of the creation; he loved Lady Alice Talbot,

but he loved himself better; the idea of being pointed at as the bold man who had ventured upon the daughter of the divorced, made him shudder; but there was one alternative that possibly might reconcile his mother to the match, and make him feel on sure grounds himself; this was, that she should hold but little intercourse with Lady Howard, and that only in his presence. This precautionary measure, could it be strictly enforced, would, he deemed, sanction his marriage with Alice Talbot, in the estimation of the most rigid moralists; and exonerate him in the eyes of the world from ridicule, that dreaded evil, which, *next to dishonour*, he most feared to incur. And yet when Colonel Leicester asked himself "Why should I part the daughter from her mother,—is there any thing *now* in the conduct or manners of the latter to find fault with? Is she not a thousand times more pure than many of those who reprobate her? True, but the crime *has been* committed, which justly condemns her to be an outcast from society; the example *has* been set to her daughter; that daughter *may* follow it; and then, if she were my wife, could I endure the disgrace? No, I will not marry Alice Talbot. And yet, how good, how beautiful, how ingenuous she is; have I not won her heart? and am I the villain to break it?"

The next time he met Lady Alice, and found himself conversing with her unobserved, he thought—now for the trial. "I have heard," he said, "a curious and a melancholy story this day,—will you allow me to tell it you? I think it will have some interest for you."

"Certainly," replied Lady Alice, rather agitated, she scarce knew why, "I am sure it will interest me very much."

He then drew her mother's story, her own position, his feelings and his wishes under feigned names, and wound up all by saying, "Do you think the daughter ought or ought not to have so far given up her mother's society in behalf of the feelings and the honour of the man she loved, or not?"—He fixed his eyes steadily upon her, and she returned his gaze as steadily; nay, with a peculiar expression of haughty disdain, as she replied,

"I know not what *that* daughter ought to have done, but if I could suppose myself in a similar case, I should say never—never should a child give up its mother for any consideration whatever; parents may be sinful in the eyes of the whole world, but their children can only see in them the beings to whom they owed their existence, and the man who could ask such a sacrifice of a daughter, must have been unworthy of the love he sought."

“I had, in some degree, anticipated your reply, but in this instance we differ.”

“We do differ,” said Alice, “decidedly.”

Colonel Leicester's disappointment was visible on his countenance, as he pressed Alice's hand, and wished her good night; but Alice evinced no expression, save that of a calm dignity, which belied the agony of her heart, for it had been irremediably crushed; she felt, to hate the man she loved,—can there be a greater pang known to the breast of woman? * * *

“Nonsense, Laura,” said Lord Howard to his wife, “I will speak to Colonel Leicester; the whole town is talking of our child's attachment to him; I hear their names coupled together as a matter of course, their marriage must in the opinion of the world, be the consequence of so great an intimacy as we have permitted to exist for some months past between them. I am asked perpetually when it is to take place? People wish me joy, and I know not what to reply; I tell you it is full time that Colonel Leicester should declare his intentions, or else I will ask him what he means, for he has gone further in this affair than I like; further than an honourable, decided man would do. I hope no evil will ensue from my having allowed matters to proceed so long without ascertaining Colonel Leicester's views. By heavens! if he has been trifling with her, if he has been amusing himself merely, I will be revenged on him.”

“Pray, Charlie,” said Lady Howard, timidly, “do not be precipitate, wait a short time longer, give Colonel Leicester time to woo and win Alice; six months is a short space to seek and obtain love; remember, Charlie, our own love; it was not the growth of a few months, it required a much longer time to make me love you.”

Lady Howard, forgetting for a moment, the attendant miserable circumstances which rendered that love sinful, smiled as she gazed on her husband's countenance, but she met with no answering smile from him; he frowned, and a fierce expression played around his mouth. In a moment poor Lady Howard remembered the truth; she blushed crimson, and was silent.

“Must you always be talking of that old story, Laura? I should have thought it was no such pleasant theme to dwell upon, but you are careful to remind me of my folly,—what the deuce has that to do with Alice and Colonel Leicester?”

“Nothing Charles, nothing, truly. *Thank God it has not.*

There is no similitude between their case and my own, unhappy one! I forgot or I should not so have spoken; but it is very seldom I forget my fault, Charlie, very seldom.

“At that moment I did, I acknowledge I did; and I remembered only the happiness I felt, when I knew you loved me, and I hoped that such might be our Alice’s portion. Do not be angry with me, love mine,” she said, as the gloom deepened over her husband’s countenance.

“Never mind, Laura, I am used to this *now*; do not fret about the matter;” and Lord Howard caressed his favourite blood-hound, a creature of enormous size and great beauty, which lay on the hearth; but this dog had often caused Lady Howard serious alarm, for, if roused to anger, he was a fearful animal, and of desperate strength.

“Well, Charles; I have only this favour to entreat of you. Do not be hasty,” resumed Lady Howard hesitatingly, “in speaking to Colonel Leicester, do not frighten him; do not give him an excuse to change his mind. Oh! above all, do not give our dear Alice pain, by forcing him to come to a decision, which, under such circumstances, might be unfavourable to her wishes—to all our wishes.”

“Pshaw! women are always so full of contrivances—so wise in their own conceits—so foolish in the great conduct of human life. Leave the matter to me, Laura. I was misled by you once, in not telling the truth to our children; and you know what were the consequences. But in this case I positively will not allow my daughter’s name to be coupled with any man’s, in the terms of familiarity with which I have heard hers and Colonel Leicester’s spoken of. If you are not sick, yet, of notoriety, Lady Howard, I am. I have had more than enough of it. We have been sufficiently long a subject for gossips. If that is the only inheritance we have to leave our unfortunate children, they will live to curse our memories. I tell you, Laura, if Colonel Leicester cares for Alice, let him declare himself openly, honourably, at once; and if *she* likes him let them marry. I place no hindrance in their way. I shall be happy at the event; but let me hear no more on this subject from you, Laura, for I am determined I will not listen to your advice. I suppose it is your own selfish fear of mortification, in discovering that you are the hindrance to the marriage, under the rose, and you are afraid of hearing this truth; which makes you so averse to bringing the matter to issue. So, you would sacrifice your children’s happiness, for the sake of keeping a tight hand over them, and having them hood-winked to your delinquency, and retaining them always

in subjection to your will ; but it is my duty to do them what justice I can, and do it I will !”

Lady Howard was well schooled in rebukes, reproaches, and angry allegations, from her husband ; but as each fresh wound was inflicted, it seemed to her as hard to bear, as though the sorrow were new and strange. She made no reply, however ; she shed no visible tear, the life drops of her heart were shed in silence within.

Lord Howard whistled his blood-hound after him, as he turned to open the door ; but in doing so, accidentally stepped heavily on the foot of his favourite. The animal instantly sprang upon his master, and seized him by the skirts of his coat. Lord Howard did not dare to move ; he knew that if he did so, he would jump at his throat.

Lady Howard rose, with apparent calmness, and struck her husband upon his shoulder ; that instant the blood-hound forgot his resentment to Lord Howard, for the injury he had received from him ; and true to his trust, faithful to his allegiance, he defended his master, and turned his wrath upon Lady Howard. He sprang upon her hand, slightly grazed it ; but at the voice of Lord Howard’s command he crouched at his feet—looked at the husband and wife alternately, with a placid self-satisfied air, and returned to his place by the hearth.

Lady Howard now trembled from head to foot ; but only said, “ Charles, that dog is a dangerous animal ; be advised in time ; send him away.”

Lord Howard did not reply for a few moments ; the whole transaction had been so brief, so astounding, that he had not collected his senses. His wife’s presence of mind, above all, the imminent risk she had run to save him,—him, her unkind and harsh husband, made him feel ashamed, nay, touched him to his heart’s core, and he exclaimed, “ Laura ! dearest—kindest ! you always return good for evil,—you always make me blush for my waywardness ;—will you forgive me this once ? I will never again !—no never——”

“ Oh ! yes, Charles—even to the thousandth time ten thousand, will I forgive you ; for have I not much to be forgiven ?”

“ Laura, I cannot bear to hear you speak so ; let me look at your hand, I trust you are not materially hurt ;—thank God not ! but you might have been. Laura ! Laura ! I shall never forget it. And for *me* ! did you so heroically run the risk of being torn to pieces ? No there is not such another being alive, as my Laura ! and pressing her warmly to his breast, she forgot every wrong, every wretchedness, for she felt that she was loved.

Lord Howard, shortly after, called the blood-hound out of the room, and determined to send it away directly.

Poor Lady Howard was for the moment happy,—happy in having, at any cost, regained her husband's favour; it was the light of her life. Shame on Lord Howard, to allow his ill-temper to vent itself on her! But such is often the portion of those who, like Lady Howard, forsake their first husband—their *first* duty.

No self-elected duty, however well fulfilled, brings with it the blessing and the peace which attends the performance of that which is appointed to us by God.

It is in vain we perform the one, if the other has been infringed upon, or neglected. In vain that such as Lady Howard endeavour to do away their offence by zeal for the object that they love, by a mistaken sense of duty towards one, whom it was not their calling to serve, honour, and obey.

The happiness such service brings is deceitful. There is a worm that never dies,—there is a fire that never shall be quenched *here*. Who shall say that this is not the portion of those who forsake their appointed calling? It is an awful consideration, and one which might be thought able to save those who tread in the same dangerous paths. But experience shows us it is otherwise. It is not at the moment when passion leads us headlong to destruction, that any sober reflection can work a salutary effect. There must have been a previous foundation of fixed principle, and religious faith, to enable the assailed to stand fast in virtue, when the hour of temptation arrives.

CHAPTER VII.

“And on that cheek, and o’er that brow;
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent.”

BYRON.

WHILE these things were passing at Howard House, Lord Talbot was living at Paris, and frequenting the hotel of Lord and Lady Harcourt, where he was received as one of the family; and the attachment he felt towards them and his play-fellow, Miss Harcourt was a sort of link that seemed to connect him

with his own; nevertheless, the natural gaiety of his disposition, which had, hitherto, attracted so many friends, was almost gone; or, if now and then some lively sally escaped him, he would, unconsciously, check himself suddenly, and the gloomy change of his countenance became the more observable, from its previous expression of gaiety. Every thing, however, went on smoothly, till Lord Vernon arrived, and then he altogether ceased his visits to the Harcourts.

Although Lady Harcourt preferred, of the two, having Lord Stuart as her guest, yet she did not like altogether to lose Lord Talbot, and the first time she met him, she reproached him for having entirely forsaken them.

He excused himself the best way he could; but whilst he was talking to her, Lord Stuart came up to them, and professed his surprise at seeing Lord Talbot; at the same time inviting them to come and dine with him, that very day, at his father's.

"By the way," he added, "It is very odd, but I think you don't know my father. I must introduce him to you. I assure you, though it is not usual to praise relations, he is one of the most delightful persons in the world."

Lord Talbot had not a word to say in reply, even Lady Harcourt felt distressed for him, and to relieve him from his embarrassment, said good humouredly, "Remember, Lord Talbot, you are engaged to dine with *us* to-day." He bowed, and pressing Lord Stuart's hand, walked away, without uttering a single word.

"How very strange!" observed Lord Stuart, looking after him, "what can be the matter with Talbot?"

Lady Harcourt was really perplexed what to answer; she was not an ill-natured woman and she did not wish to shock his feelings. Like many others, she avoided saying a disagreeable thing, and always preferred that an unpleasant truth should be told by any lips rather than her own. She changed the conversation, therefore, as soon as she could, and Lord Stuart was too much engrossed by his own thoughts to press the matter further.

Miss Harcourt was the great object of interest to him, and her mother had observed his growing attachment, with a pleasure she could not conceal; but this pleasure was considerably damped by being aware that her daughter preferred Lord Talbot. Since the latter had absented himself from their society, she had become an altered creature.

The gay Fanny Harcourt "*cette charmante Miss Fanny*," as she was called, had lost all her gaiety. It was with difficulty that her mother persuaded her to enter into the world, and

when he did go into public, she was so changed, that even the thoughtless acquaintances, who had lately sought her hand in the dance, were for the moment concerned to see her ; they feared she was going into a consumption, and some ladies professed themselves unwilling that she should be too much with their daughters, for they said, "*that English disease is so catching*, half the young English girls are *poitrinaire*."

When Lord Stuart was alone with his father, he asked him if he knew the reason why Lord Talbot avoided him ?

"When we met in Italy," he said, "he was so amiable, so gay, so ready to oblige, and be obliged, I thought him the best fellow I ever knew ; but of late he seemed changed, and broke off all intimacy with me. Yet, not that either, for he presses my hand with so much earnestness, and looks so strangely in my face, that I think he must have heard some false report about me. I cannot account for this extraordinary behaviour, I never gave him any offence. Was any of his family ever mad?"

Lord Stuart lifted his eyes to his father's countenance, and saw there a very peculiar expression, of which he could not explain the meaning.

"My dear Stuart, you have asked me the most painful question you could have asked your father ; prepare yourself for being deeply wounded. Lord Talbot's mother was once my wife, she was your mother ;" and he rose from his chair, and hid his face in his hands.

Lord Stuart was speechless. For a considerable time neither spoke.

"My father, my dear father !" said the former ; "can you forgive me for thus tormenting you ?"

"Stuart, I ought long ago to have made you acquainted with this wretched circumstance of my life ; but, my son, *you* can understand why I have not done so ; you can feel for me ; my life was blighted, but I had nothing to reproach myself with, —no, nothing. Stuart, your mother was the delight of my eyes, the glory of my existence ; when she fell from her high estate, I was a lost creature, but the past is past ; may the sorrow be only mine *now* !

"Lord Talbot is, I hear, a most exemplary young man ; it is impossible that I should live on habits of intimacy with him, but I place no restraint whatever upon your inclinations regarding him ; be to him, what you have always been, since chance brought you acquainted together, — friends."

After this melancholy avowal on Lord Vernon's part, his son was more attached to him than ever. He saw in him, not only all he loved as a parent, but all that he admired as a man ; and

it was a weight off the mind of Lord Vernon, to think that his son should know who was his mother, and that she still lived, though she was dead to them. This miserable knowledge, drew the father and son in stricter bonds of affection than before ; they had both the same sorrow to feel, though in their several ways ;—how much more poignant to the father than to the son ! —Yet still it was a companionship in wretchedness ; and there is none that is more endearing, none that takes such a high and lasting character.

Lord Stuart sought an early opportunity of meeting Lord Talbot alone.

“ Talbot,” he said, “ I know all ; my father has told me, but let us still be friends. We have both much cause to lament that we ever came into the world ; but being here let us not forget we are brothers.”

Lord Talbot rushed into his arms, they were more than ever attached.

The brothers felt, however, that there was a delicacy to be observed in their intercourse in public for their parents' sakes. and they did not wish to become the means of awakening malevolence, and be the objects who would rake up the crimes of those most dear to them.

Lady Harcourt guessed what had passed, and felt delighted to think that the *fiero passo* had been made without her intervention ; for she hated burning her fingers in other people's service ; besides, she could now ask Lord Stuart three days in the week, and Lord Talbot only two, this prevented any particularity in her attentions ; and as it was evident to her, both were enamoured of her daughter, she thought, “ Come of it what may one or other will be ours ; and though I should of course prefer Lord Stuart, we should not be very ill off with Lord Talbot.” Thus did she reason and converse with her husband, who was a jolly straight-forward person, and only replied, “ Have a care, my lady ! remember the proverb ; between two stools, one may chance to have an unpleasant tumble ;” and he laughed heartily ;—“ for my part, I always think there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, and our pretty Fanny will find a good husband at all events.” Thus did these loving parents settle the affair of their daughter's happiness, without any reference to what her ideas might be on the subject. It is wonderful how old people forget they once were young, and it is very melancholy to observe, that as life draws nearer a close, the love of its pomps and vanities seem always to increase. In youth, there is generally a noble scorn of gold, which most undoubtedly leaves the finer qualities of the mind at liberty to ex-

pand : they are not choked by the debasing worship of mammon, which, in a thousand worldly shapes, exercises a baneful influence in advancing life.

It is so difficult to part avarice from frugality, prudence from cupidity, to maintain a proper forethought, and avoid a restless anxiety about the future. The young seem in their very natures fresher from the hands of their Creator, less polluted by an inglorious greed of gain. Commonly speaking, their affections have a warmer glow, their views of happiness centre in loving and being loved ; how far more exalting, how far more pure is this ideal pursuit, (ideal though it too often be), than the acquirement of wealth, the knowledge of the value of money as it is called, and all those enslaving circumstances connected with it, the consideration of which is necessarily forced upon maturer age, and deadens those flights of imagination, those out-pourings of the heart, which can alone produce any thing that is spiritual. But one age steals on after another, so imperceptibly, that the lengthening shadow of life, together with the pollutions we have gained on our pilgrimage, wrap us in a dark mantle of cares and perplexities, from which a higher power alone can free us.

While Lord and Lady Harcourt thought of worldly advantages for their child, she was mourning over the absence of Lord Talbot. Very seldom now did he form one of their family circle, but Lord Stuart was a constant attendant. The idea of the relationship, which existed between him and his absent brother, gave him a sort of interest in the estimation of Fanny Harcourt, which she would not otherwise have felt ; and she became more intimate with him than she had hitherto been, in order that she might sometimes hear the name pronounced which was so dear to her, by one who knew his worth, and was no niggard of his praise.

For a length of time, Miss Harcourt was blind to the passion with which she was unconsciously inspiring Lord Stuart, and while indulging her own feelings for another, unfortunately encouraged hopes, which she would have been the last person in the world to have done out of a spirit of vanity or coquetry.

Lord Talbot continued to linger about Paris and its environs, not because he found interest in its pleasures, or its many objects worthy of regard, but because it was in the vicinity to his parents and his country ; those parents whom he at once loved and condemned, and that country, from which he felt himself exiled by the stain that rested on his birth. Many young men in his circumstances, would not

have entertained a sense of their position with such a bitter feeling; but his nature was tuned to that keen sense of honour, which cannot endure the least taint upon its fame. He sought alternately in study and in violent exercise to lose the consciousness of its mortification, which even when he succeeded in blunting its acuteness, sat with a heavy deadening weight upon his heart; but these remedies, which, if taken in moderation, might have been salutary, proved in their excess a deadly poison. He became dangerously ill.

One afternoon, when Miss Agar had come to pass the evening with Lady Harcourt, she said, addressing the latter, and looking at her daughter: "Have you heard that poor Lord Talbot is dying?"

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Miss Harcourt, "what do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. Doctor Manchester, who attends all the English, called upon me yesterday, and told me that he thought Lord Talbot was in a rapid consumption. You know, Lady Harcourt, that malady is an inheritance from his father's side of the house. In this instance, the doctor declared the disease to have been much accelerated by the injudicious manner in which he passed his time."

"What!" asked Lady Harcourt, glancing at Miss Harcourt, "is he so dissipated a young man?"

"Quite the reverse—pores over his books till he cannot see, and then rushes out, and rides, like a madman, all over the country, till he returns exhausted, and then begins the same course again."

"I never heard any thing so extraordinary," said Lady Harcourt; "what! he takes his mother's unfortunate story so much to heart? that is something very extraordinary; indeed I may say quite foolish."

"Well may you think so, my Lady Harcourt; he had nothing to do with his parents' delinquencies, and he will inherit his father's titles and estates, and be of as much consequence in the world, as if all were, as it should have been. Very foolish, indeed, to be such a Don Quixote; however, he is in imminent danger, and my dear Lord Vernon, having heard the fact, though he could not openly take any active part, with his usual unparalleled kindness, sent off that other doctor,—what's his name? Kimberly, in whom he has more faith than in Doctor Manchester, to attend him, in his son Lord Stuart's name.

"Was there ever such generous kindness? I am determined the Howards shall know it."

"Has no one written to them?" asked Miss Harcourt,

“to inform them of their son’s danger? How dreadful!”

“Do not be so precipitate, my dear Miss Harcourt. There was no post to-day, you know; and to-morrow, as Lady Howard’s friend, that is to say, as *Lady Vernon’s friend*, I will take that charge upon me.”

“Oh! that is kind, Miss Agar; it is terrible to think of Lord Talbot’s being left to die alone!” and unable to conceal her emotion, she left the room.

“Bless me! Lady Harcourt, what a good thing it will be for you if Lord Talbot does die. Why, it is evident, that your daughter is in love with him.”

“Oh no! you quite mistake,” said the latter, colouring, “it is only because he is Lord Stuart’s brother, that she takes so much interest in him.”

“Umph!” ejaculated Miss Agar, “old birds are not caught by chaff. I know quite well, when a thing is new, or when it is second hand. The first fresh feeling of pretty Fanny, depend upon it, is for Lord Talbot; and, as the other brother is the best *parti* of the two, for *your sake* I could not help thinking it would be advantageous, if he walked off. But I should be sorry for his mother, poor soul! I only spoke at random. I have not seen Lady Howard for years; still, I thought, remembering her as I do, Lady Vernon, it would be charitable to inform her, that Lord Talbot is not likely to live.”

“And where does the title go to, in the event of his death?”

“To a very distant relation, who never would speak to Lord Howard, since his runaway marriage, and who is represented as a strange miser that lives upon potatoe parings, somewhere in the north of England.”

“That will make a sad change to Lady Howard, indeed,” observed Lady Harcourt. “Well, these sort of ladies, who forget themselves,” (and she bridled up, and looked virtuous), “never come to a good end.”

“That’s as may be,” replied Miss Agar, “some such are very well off, but then they manage better than the Howards did.”

Lady Harcourt, and Miss Agar, found entertainment for their evening conversation, in adverting to the faults and follies of others,—a wide field of interesting matter: but more especially, they dwelt upon those of the Howards, as being their particular acquaintances.

Miss Agar, with a malignant feeling of revenge, sat down to pen a letter *aigre-doux*, to her unhappy friend.

She prefaced it by adverting to their intimacy when she was Lady Vernon. And dwelling on all the circumstances of that

epoch, which she knew would give her most pain; for she never had pardoned her—never would pardon her—for having been the innocent cause of breaking off an attachment, or rather an intimacy, with Lord Vernon, which she had flattered herself, was to have ended in marriage, but which the young and beautiful, and then innocent Miss De Lacey, put an end to, by his becoming desperately enamoured of, and demanding her hand.

This was, in fact, *the crime* of which Lady Howard stood most guilty, in her eyes, and from that moment she determined to be revenged.

With a fiendish cunning, she affected an unchanging friendship for her; and when she perceived, afterwards, the growth of that fatal passion for Lord Howard, which was to lay the foundation of misery and disgrace to two families, she aided and abetted the intrigue, while she appeared to dissuade the wife, on the one hand, and helped to deceive the unsuspecting husband, on the other; but all the while, she was the intermediate channel between Lord Howard and Lady Vernon. Sometimes conveying letters; sometimes presents; and forming parties at her house, to which they were, of course, always invited.

When the catastrophe took place, Miss Agar was the first to fly to Lord Vernon, and with consummate art, pour oil upon his wounds, such oil as the venom of her spite concocted, which lacerated the breast it seemed to soothe.

By degrees, she made herself useful, then pleasant, then necessary, to Lord Vernon. He was naturally an indolent man; had few relations, and those were not agreeable, and did not soothe him, but aggravated his feelings by the severity and cold-bloodedness of their unbending maxims.

Miss Agar's art, was to appear natural; the very bluntness of her manner, and speech, seemed a warrant for her sincerity. But she was never more aware of the value of what she was saying, than when she seemed least conscious of being so. She had gradually ingratiated herself with Lord Vernon, till she was finally a fixture in his house; and when any one made a joke of this intimacy, she shrugged up her shoulders and said, "*à mon âge, tout se peut—il n'y a plus Qu'en dira-t-on;*" nevertheless, she did not despair of yet becoming Lady Vernon. In the meantime, Miss Agar was a sort of *Madame de Maintenon*, who had all the honours of a wife, and all the substantial comforts attendant upon that character.

It was with this old spirit of malicious revenge, that she

penned and despatched her letter to Lady Howard, and slept the sleep that laudanum procures for its votaries afterwards.

But poor Miss Harcourt never closed her eyes the night she heard of the fatal tidings; and when Lord Stuart called upon her the next day, she took an opportunity to request he would allow her to speak to him alone.

Lady Harcourt was aware that her daughter had something she wished to say in secret, to Lord Stuart, and always deceiving herself to *believe* what she *wished*, hoped that matters were drawing to a conclusion between them.

Could she have overheard the conversation, how would she have deplored her complaisance in leaving them alone together.

"Lord Talbot is very ill, I fear," said Fanny Harcourt, trembling as she spoke. "I beseech you, tell me, what is the matter with him? Is he in danger?"

Lord Stuart felt, from the manner in which she pronounced these words, that his own hopes were at an end. Her feelings betrayed her secret. He who was most interested in ascertaining the truth, could not be longer deceived.

Her agitation, her changing colour, her downcast look, told him that it was his brother she loved.

Painful as this knowledge was, he answered with genuine concern, "That he feared Lord Talbot was seriously ill, but not in immediate danger."

"Thank God!" she said. "Miss Agar promised to write to Lady Howard, informing her of her son's illness. I know not why,—perhaps I ought not to say what I think to you, Lord Stuart, as she is your father's friend; but I cannot like Miss Agar."

"Nor I either," he replied, from his heart, for he had often heard her name his mother disrespectfully: "but in the present case, you feel—you must understand, there was a delicacy which prevented my doing so. I could not, perhaps, without giving offence, be the person to communicate with Lord and Lady Howard; but I took the precaution to beg Doctor Kimberly would write fully and clearly, without disguise."

"Oh! that was right, that was kind! I shall always remember your kindness."

Poor Lord Stuart! it was something to hear himself addressed thus sweetly, though it was for another's sake.

"Still," she added, after a moment's pause, "I would fain that they had some gentler notice of this misfortune; I used, as a child, to play with Lady Alice Talbot; we were very fond of each other; how I cried when I was forbade to play

with her; surely I might now write to her; gladly would I do so, gladly would I renew my intimacy with her."

"She is a delightful person, Miss Harcourt. I do not hesitate to declare that I believe her to be altogether as estimable as she is captivating, and full of talent, full of genius. An accident brought us acquainted. I cannot say whether she knows our relationship or not, but I fancied from her manner that she did; and see, (showing the tablets she had given him), "She gave me these with the verses inscribed on them; she bade me keep them for her sake. Virtuous and gentle as she is, she would not have done so, had she not known of the tie that exists between us; but I feel sure she will never own she does so, farther than this circumstance betrayed her knowledge of our relationship. Will you read this poem? it will show you the tenor of her mind. I felt after having perused it, that I had known her all my life."

"Dear Lady Alice!" replied Miss Harcourt, taking the tablets, "I have never forgotten you! and everything I have ever heard, has served to confirm my childish affection for you! Yes, Lord Stuart, I will read these lines with great interest, when my thoughts are calm, and that I am not under the excitement by which I avow myself to be at present mastered; only tell me one thing, shall I write to Alice Talbot?"

"If you are not displeasing Lady Harcourt by doing so, I am conscious you will give my sis—I mean Lady Alice,—great pleasure, but you know I dare not advise on such a subject. I fear if Lord and Lady Harcourt thought proper to break off your intimacy when you were *children*, they might feel it a much greater duty to forbid all communication now."

"I *will* write to Alice," said Miss Harcourt, "I will consult no one, I will write. Remember, I do not ask you any thing about thematter. I do not consult you; the responsibility rests with myself."

"Dear, generous Miss Harcourt! if I do not say more, it is that I feel too much."

Lady Harcourt returned; they interchanged some indifferent words, and Lord Stuart took leave.

"Well, Fanny," said her mother, as soon as he was gone, "do tell me, have you accepted him?"

"Accepted whom? What can you mean, mamma?"

"Oh, dearest child, now don't be so shy, do not hide from your parents that which they have so long expected to hear. Make us happy, my love, even as you are happy,—do tell us of Lord Stuart's proposal."

"Lord Stuart's proposal, dear mamma! I do assure you there never was any question of love between us."

"Now, Fanny, it is all very well to be discreet to others, but your own mother cannot be blind. Do you mean to tell me that Lord Stuart is not desperately in love with you? No, no, you will never persuade me of that."

"I do assure you, dear mamma, that if I had thought so, I should have ceased long ago to receive him as I have done, for I never was and never shall be in love with Lord Stuart."

"Mighty fine resolve, truly! Well; all young ladies now-a-days are so wise in their own conceits, that their poor mammas have no chance of being heard, neither in the way of advice or experience, so take your own way of it, and you will rue the consequences when too late."

Miss Harcourt was so absorbed on the one subject that filled her heart and mind, that she suffered not any other to trouble her, and she quickly dismissed Lady Harcourt's injudicious zeal from her consideration.

Nothing appeared to her worth a thought, but the danger or safety of Lord Talbot; and for the first time in her life she suffered her feelings to run away with her, and without consulting her parents, she wrote to Lady Alice Talbot.

She detailed the circumstances which she had gathered from Lord Stuart, and colouring them with her own apprehensions, she pressed the necessity of Lord and Lady Howard's coming immediately to join their son.

She was relieved after having yielded to this impulse; she satisfied herself that she had acted according to the dictates of humanity, and done as she would have been done by; she felt certain that Miss Agar never would have executed a kind office, without marring the grace of it by some sharp and unpleasant allusion, making some reference to past sorrows or past errors, that must have wounded and offended the sufferer. Not so her own tender note, to the friend and play-fellow of her early childhood; it overflowed with love, it soothed, if any thing could soothe, the melancholy tidings it communicated, and it gave so precise an account of Lord Talbot's state of health, that hardly could the statement of a medical man have been more explicit or satisfactory.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Oh! who art thou who darest of Love complain?

He is a gentle Spirit, and injures none;

His foes are ours—from them the bitter pain—

The keen deep anguish—the heart-rending groan,

Which in his milder reign were never known.

His tears are softer than the April showers

White-handed Innocence supports his throne;

His sighs are sweet as breath of earliest flowers—

Affection guides his steps, and peace protects his bowers.”

MRS. TIGHE'S *Psyche*.

AFTER Colonel Leicester's conversation with Lady Alice, in which he had put her filial love to the proof, he became more attached to her than ever. All his prudential maxims yielded to the force of his passion; and the very coldness which she evinced towards him, was an additional stimulus to his passion.

“Yes,” he said, “the person who is such a devoted daughter must make an exemplary wife.”

From that moment, he determined to introduce her to his mother Lady Margaret, and he only waited for an opportunity to bring this event to bear; but first of all he had to regain the good opinion of Lady Alice, for she had avoided him, and shown that she was offended.

One night, at a concert, at which Lord Howard and his daughter were present, the room was crowded to excess, almost to the total prevention of the enjoyment of that entertainment, for which the company were professedly assembled. On a bench, at the further end of the room, sat Lord Howard and Lady Alice.

“Is not that Colonel Leicester,” asked the former, “standing in the door-way?”

“I cannot see,” answered Lady Alice, somewhat jesuitically.

Neither could she at the moment; but she had long before that, watched him, as he remained leaning against the wall, and every now and then raising himself on tip-toe, as though to catch a glance at the singers, but, in reality, to look at herself.

“Yes,” said Lord Howard; “it is Leicester, Alice, and he

looks tired to death. We can very well admit him to a seat between us."

Standing up, therefore, he beckoned to him to approach, and with some difficulty Colonel Leicester made his way through the intervening crowd, and found himself beside Alice and Lord Howard.

"I am afraid I crowd you, Lady Alice."

"It is impossible to avoid being crowded in this room," she replied.

"Shall I go away?"

"Not unless you wish it."

She looked at him, and he remained. What a curious effect music has on two persons who are gifted with a love of it, and who sit together receiving its spirit in their souls! There are many languages besides those which are written or spoken. There is a language in the winds, a language in the waters, a language of the birds, a language of nature,—where is the voice of heaven not heard? but the language of music is, perhaps, the most forcible of any.

In listening that night to the concord of sweet sounds, without any further explanation, Colonel Leicester and Lady Alice seemed perfectly to understand each other. All was forgotten and forgiven; all prejudice was laid aside; they remembered only that they loved.

"My mother, Lady Margaret, is here to-night," said Colonel Leicester. "Will you allow me to introduce you to her?"

"Few things would give *me* greater pleasure; but——"

"But,—there can be no but in the case. I feel certain that you must be appreciated as you deserve."

Lady Alice sighed—the concert ended—every body arose.

The one-half of the company glad to indemnify themselves from the restraint of silence under which they had been placed, now burst forth in a general scream, each person talking louder than another. But it is always the most comical thing that can be, to observe how delighted every body seems when music is hushed, and that the music of their own tongues has free scope. Say what we may of entertainment derived from concerts, there is no entertainment half so popular as that which people derive from talking.

Colonel Leicester and Lady Alice smiled, as they made this remark to each other.

Lord Howard requested Colonel Leicester to give his daughter his arm through the crowd, as he wanted to speak to an old friend he saw at the other end of the room, and who was ap-

parently making his way to leave the house. Thus were Lady Alice and Colonel Leicester left completely alone together. For where are two people, who love each other, more alone than they are in a crowd?

Lady Margaret, who was standing a considerable way off, fixed her eyes instantly on Lady Alice; and Colonel Leicester rather stopped than accelerated their progress, purposely, that his mother might have leisure to examine her. This examination failed not to produce a favourable impression, and Lady Margaret was obliged to confess, that the outward form at least was worthy of her son's love. But the strong prejudice she conceived against her was not to be done away by any personal charm. She could not believe, but that the fact of her being the daughter of the divorced Lady Vernon must have tainted the moral worth of the child. Lady Margaret continued to look at Lady Alice for some moments unperceived by her, as the latter conversed eagerly with Colonel Leicester.

Lady Margaret was a fond, and a proud mother. She thought no woman could be sufficiently perfect to become the wife of her son; but as she observed the beautiful Lady Alice Talbot, and read in the varied expression of her ingenuous countenance, all the innocent love she entertained for Colonel Leicester, Lady Margaret's heart softened towards her; and when she further remarked the evident happiness, which that love had power to confer upon her son, she almost yielded in idea to give her consent to the marriage; but she thought, "I must know more of her first. I must watch her character, and time must be given to trial. In order to this, however, I will become acquainted with her."

When, therefore, Colonel Leicester brought her up to his mother, and presented her, she received her in a gracious manner, or one which she intended should be such; but the measured curtsey, the appropriate phrase in which every word was weighed and balanced in the scale of prudence and propriety, chilled the warm response of feeling with which Lady Alice had felt inclined to receive the mother of Colonel Leicester. And her manner of meeting the acquaintance took something of the tone with which the favour was conferred. Perhaps Lady Alice did not lose in Lady Margaret's estimation, for this sense of self-dignity; and if the acquaintance thus formed lost something of the warmth it might have had under other circumstances, it was not the less likely of laying a sure foundation for future affection.

If there is an inexpressible charm in the glow which a warm nature sheds over intercourse, there is perhaps a greater se-

curity of the permanency of affection in that of less demonstrative natures. Persons who are either naturally colder, or who have learned by fatal experience of treachery, or unworthiness in those to whom they have given up their souls without reserve to become more chary of their professions, more slow in forming attachments, are of much safer kind, and generally in the end, confer the most lasting happiness. The one is an aroma that inebriates, and passes off as though it had never existed,—the other is a staff and stay, in trouble; a refuge, “what time the storm beats heavy on us.” If warmth of manner and stability of purpose are united—a rare but delightful union, which sometimes, but seldom, occurs—then, indeed, that being is half angelic.

Upon the whole, Lady Leicester and Lady Alice were mutually pleased; but on the part of the one there was a doubt, on that of the other a fear, and, consequently, there was as much pain as pleasure in this interview.

When Lady Alice told her mother the next day, that she had been presented to Lady Margaret, the delighted parent thought—

“That is a sure step to my child’s happiness. Since Colonel Leicester has himself been the person to introduce her to his mother, and that she was courteously received by her, we may indulge a hope that she will not reject her as a wife for her son.”

The first beam of joy that poor Lady Howard had felt for years, now cheered her breast, and she talked the matter over with her husband in all the confidence of hope.

“I too believe, Laura, that this affair will end honourably, happily, for our child. By Heaven! if I could only suspect the contrary, I would——”

“Hush! hush! I implore you. Do not allow these bursts of temper to make us both wretched, perhaps to overthrow our Alice’s prospects altogether.”

“Laura, this hoping, and believing, is very well for a time; but certainty is what I expect: and I tell you, that if Colonel Leicester does not speedily ask Alice in marriage, I will know the reason of his delay.”

Lady Howard saw and felt that there was nothing more to be done at the present moment—nothing to be gained by reasoning with her husband; and, for the thousandth time, she repressed her feelings, and bidding them back from whence they came, to that reservoir of internal sorrow, where so much anguish was already stored, she assumed the habitual resignation of her look and manner.

“Laura,” said her husband, entering again, with an agitated air, into her apartment, “Laura, be not alarmed”—that dreadful word of preparation for the grief that is to follow—“be not alarmed; but Henry has been ill,—And, gracious Heaven! he is dying,—he is dead,” cried Lady Howard, impetuously.

“Calm yourself, I implore you; here is the physician’s letter,—two physicians. He is better: for the present all danger is over.”

“Thank God!” cried Lady Howard.

That expression, so often uttered involuntarily, and almost without meaning, was, in Lady Howard’s mouth, a *prayer of thanksgiving*. She rose, and moved mechanically towards the door.

“Where are you going, Laura? will you not read these letters?” holding them to her.

“I *must* go to see him,” she said, in a bewildered manner; “you know he must not die before I see him.”

Lady Alice came into the room: she threw herself into her mother’s arms, and wept; but said, through her tears, “Henry is better—much better,—almost quite well now. I have got a kind letter from my dear old playfellow, Fanny Harcourt: she will not deceive us,—she tells us the truth; she writes that he is almost quite well.”

Lady Howard soon recovered composure. She listened to the voice of her daughter,—she was soothed by the caresses of her husband, and suffered the letters to be read to her. They all agreed in the account they gave of Lord Talbot’s recovery, and they pacified the anxiety of the parents and the sister.

Lord Howard, however, determined to set off instantly for Paris; and promised his wife that he would either bring back Lord Talbot, or that she should join them there.

This promise hardly satisfied Lady Howard; but when her husband represented to her that there was a chance now, if ever, of their child being restored to them, and of seeing him once more reinstated in their family circle, she yielded the point, and consented to remain; providing that in the event of his being unable to travel, she should set off immediately to join him.

This consent, though wrung from her most unwillingly, was somewhat less insupportable, when in the course of the ensuing day she received Miss Agar’s letter; which, owing to its being sent under cover to a third person, did not reach her at the same time with the other letters.

Miss Agar, in the most artful manner, and under a seeming kindness of expression, conveyed every circumstance which

she thought could most embitter the intelligence of her son's illness to Lady Howard. She praised Lord Stuart openly, and by name, and dwelt on the perfection of his character, as having been peculiarly shown in his attention to his *brother*, as she designated Lord Talbot; and insinuated that his malady was chiefly owing to his own imprudence, and the strange life he led: thus insinuating that it was owing to idleness, dissipation, or worthlessness that his illness might be attributed; and then adroitly turning the corner of this assertion, she added, "But, poor dear young man! perhaps these reports are disseminated by the envious, or the malevolent; for we all know too well that consumption is in the Howard family,—they have every one died of it for many generations back."

She closed this treacherous letter by assuring her, that all Paris had rung with Lord Stuart's amiable conduct on this occasion, and did him ample justice.

Miss Agar closed this mass of spite and malevolence by adverting to the time of their innocent and romantic friendship; which, she said, she always looked back upon with regret, and had often thought of Laura Vernon as the fairest and the best of her sex.

Lady Howard drank the bitter dregs thus poured out by a false friend, in silence, and committed the paper to the flames: but she could not so get rid of the sting which it had conveyed.

"But what does it matter what she thinks, what she says, so as my dear child be well.—Oh! grant me but his life," she said, "gracious heaven!" and fell on her knees in agony of supplication.

Lord Howard went to Paris. He carried with him a letter from the mother to the son. It was one of deep tenderness, and of deeper humiliation.

"Let me not," she said, "receive my death-stroke from you, Henry: if you separate yourself from your father and me, are you not proclaiming to the world your parents' crimes? Have mercy upon us—have mercy upon us dearest son!—Whatever we may deserve from others, from you, our child, we should not meet with contumely and coldness. Think what a subversion of the order of nature it is for a parent to sue to a child; and I do sue to you, Henry—I do implore you, by all your hopes of happiness, here or hereafter, scorn not the mother who gave you birth,—the mother who loves, and who would gladly die for you. Return with your father, and bless us once again. Remember, your sister, too, requires the support of your pre-

sence. Henry, she is beloved by a man of honour ; a man who would not ally himself into a family if he despised them. He feels that your pure and beautiful sister is, in herself, a treasure, and overlooks the miserable circumstance of her parent's crime ; ought you, our child—our only son, to be less indulgent than a stranger ? and would you not grieve to think that Alice should be married, and you not present at her marriage ? Henry, my pleadings are vain, unless nature pleads for me ; unless the love of a child for its parent moves you to seek me, all is vain ; and I have fruitlessly wept and prayed, and humbled myself to the dust before you. Henry, my son—my son. I cannot believe this possible !

“L. HOWARD.”

The sight of his father, when Lord Talbot once more beheld him, as quickly answering the tidings of his illness in person, as he could have done almost by letter, overcame his son ; and in his weak state it was some time before he could thank him for his solicitude, and inquire for his mother and sister. Letters were given him from both, but he awaited to be alone before he opened them.

Lord Howard was agreeably surprised at seeing his son. The brilliant colouring—the sparkling eye deceived him, and gave a favorable answer to his wishes.

“Come—come, dear Henry,” he said, “you have not been so ill as has been represented to us, or you never could look so well so soon.”

“I dare say,” he replied, smiling, “they have frightened you. In vain did I beseech those wilful doctors to write in such a manner as not to alarm you and my mother ; but you know how bent they are upon having their own way.”

“In this instance, Henry, I cannot blame them ; it is better to know the worst, than to be lulled into a false security.”

The father and son, happy, mutually, in being once more together, and the former wrapped in that very delusion which he said he deprecated, enjoyed the conversation of his child without any alloy, or forgot the cause which had occasioned him to leave his home.

When alone, Lord Talbot opened his mother's letter with mingled feelings of affection and sorrow ; but when he read the contents, he was touched to his inmost soul. He blamed himself for having allowed, what he now deemed selfish pride, to have betrayed him into disrespect to the authors of his being, and he came to a better sense of his own peculiar duties, and first of all duties, “Honour thy father and thy mother, that

thy days may be long in the land ;” and he thought too, how nearly he had been cut off in the bloom of his existence ; and how dreadful it would have been to die while under the influence of feelings which made him harsh to his parents, and in a spirit of hostility to them, who had never shown anything but the fondest affection towards himself.

Lord Talbot was a changed creature from that moment, and he devoutly hoped that his life might be spared, in order to dedicate it to his parents. A perfect calm succeeded to the irritability which had lately marked his conduct ; and the consequence was, he became rapidly better. He was more impatient even than his father, that they should go back to England, and thought every moment lost that intervened between that and the day fixed upon for their departure. When at length it came at the same undeviating pace at which time always travels, but under such various semblance of slowness or rapidity to those who watch its progress with anxious eye, the father and son left Paris, together, with spirits full of hope, and love, and joy, to return to the dear resting place of *home*.

The first day’s journey however proved too much for Lord Talbot ; the symptoms of lassitude returned, and those various melancholy indications of the disease he laboured under, showed themselves afresh. The rest of the journey was made at a slower rate, and Lord Talbot again rallied.

There are moments in life which cannot be related, or even recalled distinctly to the memories of those who have passed them. Great happiness, great misery, in their first intoxicating or stunning effects, cannot be analyzed. We pursue the feeling in idea afterwards, but in vain. Why should we rejoice that it eludes our grasp of thought ? We are to change and be changed. The first is a humiliating consideration to the best feelings of our nature, but not unsalutary ; it keeps us humble : the latter, rightly considered, is a consoling ;—*we shall be changed*.

The mother and the son embraced each other ; in that embrace they felt a perfect communion, and it may be said, in heart and soul, from that moment they were one.

CHAPTER IX.

“Ah, me! for aught that ever I could read—
 Could ever hear by tale or history,
 The course of true love never did run smooth :
 But, either it was different in blood ;—
 Or else misgraff’d in respect of years ;—
 Or else it stood upon the choice of friends :
 Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
 War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it ;
 Making it momentary as a sound
 Swift as a shadow, short as any dream ;
 Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
 That in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
 And ere a man hath power to say, Behold !
 The jaws of darkness do devour it up :
 So quick bright things come to confusion.”

Midsummer Night's Dream.

THIS family re-union was a cordial in the cup of Lady Howard's life. She seemed to enjoy every passing hour with a greediness of its value, which might have made a spectator fear for its duration.

About six weeks after Lord Howard's return with his son from the continent, Miss Agar likewise came back with Lord Vernon. Her first visit was to Lady Margaret Leicester.

“I hope I see your ladyship quite well: your looks belie you if you are not in health. Brighton has done wonders for you. Really, you are as blooming as you were thirty years ago.”

“Nonsense! my dear Miss Agar; you'll excuse me, but though I may deceive myself in many things, I cannot do so in the belief that I grow younger or handsomer. However, I am in very good health, and able to enjoy the pleasures suitable to my age;—that is a blessing, for which I am thankful. But how comes it, that young and old, men and women, married and single, cannot rest in their own country, now a-days, without fidgetting about abroad, as they call it? *Abroad*, indeed!—a broad way to destruction very often; for my part, I can see no advantage whatever to be derived from living with a parcel of doubtful characters in a strange land. We have quite enough of such in our own country, without seeking them elsewhere. Wha, in the name of surprise, took you off, to swell the list of gadabouts?”

“ I quite agree with your ladyship ; but you know poor Lord Vernon is in very indifferent health. He was always an indolent man, and now he is so helpless, that it is pitiable to see him. I am become a necessary part of his household indeed, though I do not mean to praise myself. I must tell you, I have saved him several thousand pounds since I looked into his affairs ;—so cheated by his servants !” —she threw up her eyes ; —“ it is quite frightful to think of it ! Lord Stuart is the most amiable creature that ever lived ; but a young man of his age cannot be expected, you know, to act steward or housekeeper. And, then, I make up my lord’s cribbage at night—a sad slavery, to be sure, altogether, but one which I can never have the heart to break through so long as I live.” She paused for breath, then resumed. “ Your ladyship has doubtless heard the curious story of Lord Talbot’s illness, and of his most amiable brother having paid him such attentions as a legitimate relation alone could expect to receive. He did not stop there—he even persuaded Lord Talbot to return to his disconsolate parents ; for you remember he left them in a fit of highflown mortified pride, when he learnt his mother’s history. Certain it is, whatever truth there be in that part of the report, Lord Talbot has returned with his father ; but I do not suppose he can live long ; you know the Howards are all consumptive ; but I ought not perhaps, to have said this to your ladyship !”

“ Why not, Miss Agar ?”

“ If all I hear be true ; but I can scarcely believe it.”

“ What do you hear ?”

“ Why surely your ladyship knows that Colonel Leicester passes all his time with the Howards, and is shortly to marry Lady Alice ?”

Lady Margaret turned very pale, and her lips grew perfectly white.

“ Nobody would dare to tell *me* such unwelcome news ; but I guessed the truth. It is a great disgrace.”

“ My dear Lady Margaret, how I feel for you ; but surely you can prevent this ?”

“ Yes, by losing my son’s affection. If I were to command him, on pain of my displeasure, and in consideration of the wretchedness he would bring on me, not to marry the girl, he *would not* marry her ; but, as he gave me to understand, what would then be the consequence ?—why, he would hate me, and separate himself from me. Thus I should have only a choice of evils. No, it must be so ; the blood of the Leicesters is to be defiled ; their honours sullied by an alliance, not of inferior birth—for I could have borne that misfortune—but to think

of the pollution of vice, the degradation of being allied to a family who are branded with crime,—horrible!”

“Nay, dear Lady Margaret, do not suffer this unfortunate event to take such hold upon you, or it may hurt your health, so precious to all who love you. It is, I confess, a very disagreeable circumstance; but then consider how many persons are in the same boat with you. People do not entertain these matters as they used to do; the generality of the world hold such delinquencies as venial trespasses; and they think nothing of intermarrying in families whose parents have stepped aside, especially when rank and wealth gild the pill. It is in vain to set oneself up on high, and say that we will always maintain our position; everybody comes down in their turn.”

“May be so, Miss Agar, as to the outward shows and circumstances of life; but as to the moral dignity of our being, it is only our own depravity which can lower us in that respect.”

“In that case, your ladyship personally will not suffer by this untoward alliance.”

“In my son’s person and interests, I am as vulnerable as in my own. He was my pride, my glory; now——” Lady Margaret restrained the starting tear, and remained silent.

“If this be really the case, and since you feel this affair so keenly, an idea has occurred to me, just an accidental thought, which may save you from losing your son’s affection, and yet effectually prevent his marrying Lady Alice.”

“Name it; and if you are not deceiving me, I shall have cause to bless you; but the thing is impossible.”

“Not so. Mark me, I know Lady Alice—she is a very rare and particular character. Send for her, and *tell her* the truth—dwell upon the infamy of her mother in having left so perfect a husband as Vernon—swell the theme with every possible argument which may tend to aggravate Lady Howard’s crime—and then put it to herself, if she were a mother, whether or not she could endure that the pride and glory of her House should marry one, who would bring pollution and disgrace upon him. Having secured her refusal of your son’s proposal, then exact a promise from her, that she never tells Colonel Leicester why she refuses him; but you must tell *her* the truth, and give her your reason for this concealment: say it is because you fear you would lose his affection were she to do so. I know Alice Talbot, and that which no other girl would do, under similar circumstances, she will.”

Lady Margaret had listened very attentively; and when Miss Agar ceased speaking, she remained for a few minutes silent. When she resumed the discourse, it was to say,—

“Miss Agar, knowing Lady Alice as well as you profess to do, would it not be more easy and more natural that you should yourself speak to her, and use the arguments which you think would have weight with her?”

“No, no, Lady Margaret, that would have no power to effect your purpose; my speaking to her would be the very way to mar your end. Besides, I was *once her mother's friend*, and it would not come so well from me as from yourself. Make her *feel* that she is the child of a divorced woman; besides, we always plead our own cause best; take my counsel, send for Lady Alice.”

After due consideration, Lady Margaret was determined to adopt this advice. So she turned in her mind what would be the most natural way of obtaining a conversation alone with her victim, without exciting any suspicion on the part of the latter; and she decided that an invitation to dine would be the best means of compassing her end.

When the card reached Howard house it excited much conversation and interest between Lord and Lady Howard. “At last,” said the latter, triumphantly, “Alice's virtues are done justice to—even the haughty Lady Margaret relents.”

“I have a great mind not to go, Laura. Colonel Leicester is not behaving well; positively, and for the last time I declare to you, that if he does not speedily come to a decision respecting our Alice, he shall never enter these doors more.”

“Very well, Charles, doubtless you are the best judge how to act in this affair for Alice's happiness; but I do implore you give the Leicesters no handle to break off. Accept Lady Margaret's invitation to dinner—consult Talbot, hear what he says on the subject.”

Lord Talbot was of his mother's opinion; indeed he never differed now from any thing that she proposed; only he looked distressed as he read his father's, his own, and his sister's name on the invitation without Lady Howard's. His countenance changed; his long eyelashes dropped over his eyes, and gave them that tender melancholy expression which his mother understood but too plainly. She pressed his hand, and bade him not think of that.

“I am quite satisfied now,” she said; “now that you are restored to me, I have more blessings far than I deserve.”

Lord Talbot felt that here, at least, his mother had expiated her offence by the meek endurance of the mortifications which she had suffered, and was hourly to suffer. He felt afresh how wrong he had been, in giving way to that haughty sentiment of self-love and pride which had driven him from his parents, and

renewed inwardly his vows of affectionate obedience to them with a fervour, proportioned to the remorse he endured at having ever conducted himself so unlike a son to a parent.

Lady Alice could not help indulging the belief, that this dinner given by Lady Margaret Leicester portended future happiness to her. She naturally thought that Colonel Leicester's mother would never have sought this intimacy unless she had made up her mind to receive her as a daughter-in-law; for although nothing decided had passed between Alice and her lover, yet that he was her lover she could not doubt, and still less was she in any uncertainty respecting her own sentiments towards him. When the day arrived which promised so much pleasure, with a joy fluttering at her heart, which tinged her cheek with a brighter glow, and glittered in her eyes, Lady Alice kissed her mother's forehead, and ran lightly down stairs after Lord Howard and her brother, who were waiting for her at the carriage door. When arrived at Lady Leicester's house, servants in unusual numbers were stationed at the door and on the staircase, announcing their names with loud reiteration. Lady Alice thought what a numerous party this will be, and was abashed as she passed in review before this formidable phalanx of attendants. When she reached the drawing-room, she scarcely knew whether she was standing in the midst of a crowd or not, so completely had her own feelings confused her; but when she ventured to cast a stolen glance around, she beheld only Lady Margaret and her son, and concluded herself and family were the first arrived guests. After a few unmeaning words of ceremony had passed, Lady Margaret sat down by Alice Talbot, and talked of various subjects, on all of which the latter seemed well informed, without pedantry; and Lady Margaret tacitly thought, that she had never seen so much self-possession of manner conjoined to such modest simplicity—but she was surprised, not pleased at the discovery. Two or three gentlemen soon came in: Lady Margaret's attention to her guests was of course divided; but the great assemblage which Alice expected, she found, proved only to be the small circle already named; and the dinner was formal, and the conversation did not flow; she thought it interminable, and felt relieved when Lady Margaret retired to the drawing-room. As soon as they had had coffee, and that the servants were dismissed, Lady Margaret drew her chair closer to Lady Alice, and looking at her very fixedly she said—

“It is painful to me to speak to you on the subject on which I must now address you, but I owe it to myself. I owe it to my

son, and I owe it to you, Lady Alice, to tell you, before you have engaged your affections irrevocably—”

Lady Margaret hesitated; she was not a *bad* though a hard-hearted woman; and as she looked on the sweet face of Alice Talbot, she could scarcely find courage to wound her, as she knew she should—indeed as she intended to do.

“ Yes, I have determined to tell you,” she continued, speaking quicker, “ that I never will sanction my son’s marrying you under *present* circumstances.”

Lady Margaret’s words were so unexpected, that Alice was struck dumb, and for a few moments remained silent.

Lady Margaret awaited her answer with an impatience she scarcely could conceal; but at length, seeing Alice did not reply, she reassumed her tone of calm decision, and laying her hand on Lady Alice’s arm, said,—

“ Has he proposed to you?—Have you accepted Leicester?”

Poor Alice! she had buoyed up her heart with pleasure when she came into Lady Margaret’s house; the very circumstance of having been invited there, seemed a security of a kind welcome, not merely as a guest, but as Colonel Leicester’s future wife; and now, when Lady Margaret announced her decision so suddenly—so unexpectedly, she was quite unprepared to reply; but she collected her self-command and with that consciousness of innocence in having nothing to conceal, which always restores self-possession after the first moment of surprise is past, she said—

“ Your son, Colonel Leicester, has never proposed to me, Lady Margaret, therefore I have neither accepted nor rejected him, nor am I aware that he has any intention of asking me in marriage, consequently it is unnecessary to lay your injunctions upon me, or to express your disapprobation at a union which, if persons in general have reported as likely to take place, remains at present unknown to the parties most concerned. How I should act under different circumstances I am at a loss to say, being unprepared to decide the question.”

Lady Margaret was surprised, and wholly unprepared for such a reply. Well, she thought, Miss Agar never was more mistaken in the character of any one than in that of Lady Alice. Here is no high flown romance, or heroic determination of unnatural self-sacrifice, but a sensible, plain-spoken, cautious reply, which entirely overthrows Miss Agar’s plan, and renders it vain for me to pursue this course. But when Lady Margaret looked again at Alice, and saw the changes which passed over her countenance, she was aware that the apparent calmness of

the answer differed greatly from the feelings that were passing within. Another pause, and again Lady Margaret resumed her attack:—

“Nay, now, Lady Alice Talbot, you *must* be aware that Leicester is in love with you, that he admires you exceedingly, and no wonder,” she added, “for *you* are very charming.”

Lady Margaret was a woman, and what woman does not, by self-experience, know the effect which a word of flattery may produce on some characters, especially when pronounced at the right moment; and applied judiciously it has the power of disclosing secrets which every other means would fail to unfold.

But Lady Margaret mistook when she used such arts on Alice Talbot.

“Perhaps *you* do not dislike my son,” and she smiled cunningly as she looked hard at the person upon whom she was acting the part of inquisitor.”

When a home question is urged, it is difficult to evade a reply in kind; and when the latter asked Lady Alice if she loved her son, there was an end of caution,—an end of reserve on her part, and she answered, her colour varying in a thousand tints as she spoke,

“Yes, Lady Margaret, I will not deny that I love Colonel Leicester, but you are the only person to whom I would confess that love, for, remember he has never *said* that he loved *me*. So I trust your honour as a woman, (one who can feel the dignity and the delicacy which every woman owes herself,) to keep a secret, which but for you would never have been revealed.”

Lady Margaret was surprised, *almost* touched; she had found so much to admire, so much to honour in the person she wished to crush, that she wavered how to proceed; for she could appreciate, though she could not imitate such genuine greatness of character as she had found in Lady Alice, but the *principles* by which she was guided were so consonant with Lady Margaret’s own theory of right and wrong, that she half repented of having spoken so harshly, and pronounced such a peremptory decision.

“You may depend on my secrecy, Lady Alice,” was her reply; and Alice might depend upon Lady Margaret’s promise, for she was a woman who never swerved from her word. Still prejudice was so deep rooted in her nature, that she could not divest herself of it, and she thought inwardly—“Yes, she is very captivating—very superior, but still her mother, Lady Howard, is a divorced woman—Alice is come of a bad nest:”

—then speaking aloud,—“any one who loves Leicester truly, who loves him not merely from admiration of his personal fascinations, or for the sake of the adventitious circumstances by which he is surrounded, I love. I should esteem such a woman—I should be proud of her personally as his wife. I have certainly no reason to doubt the sincerity of your love for Leicester, Lady Alice, or your purity, but there are circumstances—circumstances not under your control, which oblige me, from the interest I take in my son’s welfare, to prevent, inasmuch as in me lies, the progress of his attachment for you; and I feel imperatively called upon to make known to you both, that, consistently with my ideas of a parent’s duty, I never can give my consent to your union.”

“I am grateful to you, Lady Margaret, for being so candid, and for giving me warning not to indulge hopes which would fail of being realized, but which, indeed, I have never yet entertained, for I have had no right to do so. Again I beg to remind you I trust to your honour, Lady Margaret, not to divulge the secret I have reposed in you, and I assure you, that on *my* part, I will never again encourage attentions from your son which are displeasing to you; indeed I never would marry any man without the consent of his parents, and should scorn to inveigle a child from its allegiance; no, God forbid that I should ever be so guilty!”

“Yet, Lady Alice Talbot, remember the circumstances, which now oblige me to withhold my countenance from Leicester’s marrying you, may be changed; and, then, I could have no reason (if you both continued to be of the same mind,) to oppose my son’s union with Lord Howard’s daughter. Therefore, do not despair: a few years, nay, perhaps a much shorter time may enable me to welcome you proudly as my son’s wife. Life and death are so uncertain (she forgot to include her own in that uncertainty,) the unfortunate barrier betwixt you and my son may be removed.”

Alice did not dare to ask what barrier, or to say, “To whom do you refer?” for she perfectly understood the unfeeling allusion; but she determined, if possible, not to suffer Lady Margaret to be aware that she did so; that triumph of scorn, she thought, shall at least be wanting to the gratification of her malevolence; and summing up all her moral courage, she replied:—

“No, Lady Margaret, there are no barriers to Colonel Leicester’s union with me, but those which you yourself are pleased to erect; but it is enough that you have told me you do not choose I shall become Colonel Leicester’s wife, even were

he desirous that I should be his, (which neither you nor I have a right to believe he is;) and however great my affection might be for any man, I have already declared I never would enter as an unwelcome relation in the family even of the person most dear to me. So enough on this subject, Lady Margaret : be at rest. It is very unlikely that I should ever be Colonel Leicester's wife."

Fortunately for Lady Alice—fortunately for both her and Lady Margaret, the gentlemen came into the room, and prevented any further conversation.

Colonel Leicester came up immediately to the former, with a pleased air, and a happy expression beaming on his countenance. He thought "All now must be arranged according to my wishes. My mother has been captivated by Alice; nothing on her part need prevent my long meditated proposal; and after the proof I have had of her duty and affection for a parent, it were folly to doubt that she will make an unexceptionable wife. What signifies, in fact, the mistaken, harsh-judging, false-judging world? Can the error of a mother sully the purity of her offspring? No—not in reality, but in appearance—ay, there's the sting"—all these thoughts mingled and shifted to and fro in his mind, although the pleasurable conviction that Lady Alice had ingratiated herself with his mother was the prominent feeling of the moment, and gave to his manner that indescribable charm which the gentler affections never fail to impart. Alas, for Lady Alice! she was to observe and to feel this: she was to be aware that she was loved—that she was even conquering the cautious and prudential maxims of her lover, but that her success was vain—that she was to see the cup of bliss even at her lips, and to deny herself its acceptance—she was to hide from every one the pang that devoured her, and smile while her heart was in anguish. Her flushed cheek, her glittering eyes, the state of feverish excitation into which she had been thrown by Lady Margaret, all tended to deceive Colonel Leicester. He concluded his mother had expressed herself favourably to his wishes; and, thrown off his guard by the deceptive hopes he entertained of her approval of the object of his affection, he said, speaking low and quick, to avoid being heard by others,

"Lady Alice, contrive some opportunity for me to see you alone to-morrow; grant to me half an hour's undisturbed interview."

"I can have no reason for refusing you, unless it be the idea that I shall give you pain."

Colonel Leicester's countenance changed.

"Do you know, then, the subject on which I wish to converse with you?"

Alice's face was alternately pale, and then crimson, as the blood went and came from her heart.

"I may be wrong, but I guess—perhaps—it is cruel in *you* so to ask me," and she gasped for breath.

Lady Margaret, who had been watching them narrowly, now called Colonel Leicester to make up Lord Howard's party at whist; and he had only time to say, "Remember, Lady Alice, do not refuse me."

The last three or four words were overheard by Lady Margaret. She looked at Alice, as much as to say, "Are you to be trusted? will your self-denial bear you through?—will you not break your promise?"

Alice returned her questioning glances with an air of haughty disdain, and bore her part through the evening with a power of self-command which pertains to very few characters.

The high spirits of her father, heightened, perhaps by wine, were not to be repressed; and as he drove home with her that night, he could not help saying, "Well, Alice, have you nothing to say to me? not one word of confidence?"

"Dearest papa, you know I have never had any secrets from you."

"Then why, Alice, should you have now. You are aware that to see you Colonel Leicester's wife would make your mother and myself the happiest of creatures. We have no care, no interest half as dear to us, for Henry does not want our care as you do. Tell me, then for I cannot bear this suspense, has Colonel Leicester proposed to you?"

"No, papa."

"Well, that is most extraordinary. It is not possible he should mean to jilt you. Alice, I desire that if he does not shortly explain himself to you, that you never speak to him again. My door shall be shut to him for ever."

Dearest papa, I have no right to quarrel with Colonel Leicester: he never professed to love me."

The more shame for him. He has won your affections, and kept on fast and loose—for what? for the indulgence of his own vanity, at the expense of your honour and happiness. I have thought hitherto that his mother's disapprobation of the alliance might have been some apology for him; but even that has no excuse; and *now*, we are certain his mother likes us all, and appreciates *you*, as she well may; it is therefore, I repeat it, downright villany on his part if he does not speedily come forward, and ask your hand."

"You are mistaken, papa, respecting Lady Margaret. I know that she would not hear of a union between me and her son—it is perfectly out of the question that I should ever become Colonel Leicester's wife."

"You astonish me, Alice! but be that as it may, he must and shall propose to you, or I will know the reason of it."

Alice sighed, and was silent. That melancholy night was ended, and her weary and perplexed spirit found rest in sleep.

CHAPTER X.

For several virtues

Have I liked several women; never any
With so full soul, but some defect in her
Did quarrel with the noblest grace she owed,
And put it to the foil: but you, O you,
So perfect, and so peerless are created
Of every creature best.

SHAKSPEARE'S *Tempest*.

WHEN Colonel Leicester came the next day, and requested to see Lady Alice—although she had prayed fervently for strength to act, as conscience dictated to her it was right she should—she felt so unable for the conflict, that had it not been for the idea of vexing her mother, and enraging her father, she would have put off the decisive but dreaded interview. After a short, but severe struggle with herself, she went to meet Colonel Leicester.

He opened at once upon his subject. "We have been so long acquainted, so long *friends*, I hope I may say, that I feel it not altogether so abrupt as it would otherwise be, to declare what you have already discovered, dear Lady Alice, that I passionately love you; but it is not my practice to yield to impulses, however strong they may be, without consulting those principles of moral fitness which can alone give stability to the affections. For this reason I have watched you, dearest—dare I call you so?" (she suffered him to take her hand, and kiss it)—"watched you in the most delicate and difficult situation in which a daughter can be placed; may even tried you myself, and never in thought, word, or deed, have I found a speck or flaw in you; whilst you must have thought me cold, measured, unworthy of daring to aspire to your love."

"I have long wished to implore you to become my wife; but I would not do so till I knew that you could be a wife in all

the duty, as well as in all the fondness of the tie ; neither would I, while my mother opposed our union, subject you to endure her contumely, which, though springing out of right motives, was in itself wrong ; but now, dearest, that she is as much impressed by your motives and charms almost as I am myself—now that she no longer opposes——”

Alice started—“No longer opposes, Colonel Leicester ! what do you mean ? has she then changed so completely since last night ?”

“Changed, Alice, dearest ? What ! did my mother speak to you on the subject of our marriage, and did she refuse it her sanction ?”

“Yes, she did ; and in terms so decisive, that it was impossible I could misconstrue them : she told me that there was a barrier to our union over which I had no control, and while that barrier existed, she said it was her duty, as a parent, to prevent it by every means in her power.”

“Is it possible ?” and Colonel Leicester struck his forehead. “And you, Alice, what did you reply ?”

“I told her that neither she nor I had any right to suppose that you intended to propose to me ; but that she might rest assured I never would enter the family of any man who would reject my alliance, nor would I attempt to win the affections of one whose parents disapproved of me as a relation.”

“She must have honoured you for the declaration : but hear *me* plead, Alice. I do not ask you, even now, hastily to break through this resolution ; but I do implore you to give me hope, and to allow time to soften the prejudices of my mother before you altogether refuse my suit.”

“Do not indulge such a hope, Colonel Leicester ; *she* will never change, and I will never debase myself. No ! though my life should pay the forfeit of my determination. Were it myself only whose interests were to be consulted—whose pride was to be humbled—I might be weak—I might consent to be trodden under foot ; but—as it is—Never !—”

“Nay but Alice, dearest, who wishes to crush you ? who could have the heart—who could dare ?—should I not resent it to the utmost ? Am I not as jealous of your feelings as you can be yourself ! I am—believe that I am ? Only, when the happiness of a life time depends upon a little forbearance—a little temporising—is it not worth yielding some minor circumstances of outward appearance to ensure so lasting—so great a good ?”

“To what do you allude—be explicit ?”

“I allude to this: if my mother exacted of us that you should never see your mother but in my presence, never appear with her in public, never, in short—”

“Never, in short, be as a daughter to my own mother.—Colonel Leicester, I am surprised how you should tamper with me thus, or suppose that I could listen to you for a moment. You know my mother is dearer to me than my life—dearer even than my love for you; and I solemnly declare, that no earthly power—no strength of attachment, shall ever make me swerve from that dutiful affection which I bear my mother. I will never be separated from her for any other tie. I will ever love, and honour, and cherish her, and you wound and offend me by touching on this subject; and it is best that we close our conversation here. I honour you for the love you bear your mother: respect me for that with which I am devoted to mine.”

“God knows I do, Lady Alice; but I will not so readily resign all hope. I will use such influence with my mother—such unabating entreaty; I will place before her consideration such incontrovertible facts, that I must soften her heart; and *then* will you promise me to entertain my suit?”

“Colonel Leicester, I may not listen to proposals made under such limitations and circumstances as I cannot be supposed to pardon, neither will I give any promise upon a subject which I am persuaded will never come in such a shape as will justify my considering it before-hand.”

“You forbid me your presence, then—you deny me all hope?”

“I have no right to forbid you to come to my father’s house;—that rests with him! and as to hope, you best know, Colonel Leicester, what cause you have for hope or fear.”

Lady Alice rose, and without another word she left him alone. He stood for some time looking after her. He wished to recal his words, his last words. He wished he had made no observation that could have wounded her. He would have given much to have proffered his hand in another manner, and without any limitation or bargaining respecting her intercourse with Lady Howard, but it was too late now; he had sealed his fate; he was to resign Lady Alice, and endeavour to think that the sacrifice which is made to a mother is always rewarded; but not to an unreasonable, harsh and proud woman, whose own selfish feelings actuated her conduct, and put fetters on that of her son. Duty, in such a case, loses its character of virtue, and almost becomes weakness.

As soon as Colonel Leicester had left the house, Lady

Howard sent for her daughter. One glance, as she entered the room, served to convince her that her expectations were abortive; and when Alice endeavoured to throw the blame on Lady Margaret, without allowing it to appear that her mother was the cause of her dislike to the match, Lady Howard was aware that she was herself the object of Lady Margaret's abhorrence to the alliance.

How true it is, that we suffer the chastisement of our follies or our crimes long after their commission, and it may be, when we least expect to reap such bitter fruits.

Lady Howard's life had indeed been one tissue of humiliation, but never till she met it in the persons of her children was it felt in all its weight of anguish. It is in those we love that we are most vulnerable. The iron that enters into the soul is that with which a beloved object is wounded. For ourselves, it is easy to forgive slights, injuries, and offences; but let the least thorn of these piercing goads touch the object of our affections, and the gentlest natures are roused into momentary fury; nay, sometimes where the offence has been of long or repeated kind, there is a lasting dislike to the person who inflicted it, which nothing but the Christian's prayer can mollify.

In this instance, Lady Howard's hatred was turned against herself. She did not attempt to evade the knowledge that it was her crime which now rendered her daughter a rejected woman; and if ever punishment can be supposed bitterer than another, it is that which makes us feel we have caused the misery of the child of our love.

Lady Howard did not tell this to her daughter, but her pangs were only aggravated by being unshared and unknown to mortal.

When Lady Alice had to explain the same story to her father, he took it up in quite a different point of view, and conceived that Lady Margaret's supposed opposition to the match was only an excuse which Colonel Leicester made to break off from an engagement of which he was tired; and though Alice was rather happy than otherwise that he should thus misconceive the motive of Colonel Leicester's conduct on one account, yet on another, she suffered the most poignant anxiety. In order, therefore, to turn her father's displeasure solely on herself; she declared that nothing would make her accept Colonel Leicester."

"Ah!" said he, "I thought so; I thought it was some devilish fantastical notion that you had taken into your head, which made you say something to offend the man. He could

not—he durst not otherwise have behaved as he has done. Then you refused him?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that was quite enough to disgust any man with you, after all the encouragement you have given him. And still he implores to be received in our house as a friend;—still supplicates that you will permit him to entertain a distant hope, however faint, that you may think otherwise at some future time. I therefore expect, Alice, that you will treat Colonel Leicester with the politeness which is due to my friend; and that you will, by no implied dislike, become the means of depriving me of his society.”

Alice knew the injustice of her father's harshness, but she had wished to shield the man she loved from all imputation of blame; and, above all, she desired to ward off from her mother any humiliation from which it was in her power to save her, even at the cost of her own happiness.

Another cause of anxiety and interest now visited the Howards, and made their thoughts centre in one object, to the exclusion of all else, for the moment.

The winter had set in with unusual severity, and the dangerous symptoms of Lord Talbot's malady returned. The physicians wished him to go abroad, but he would not hear of it; and he said to his sister, when they were alone together,—

“Alice dear, do not let our father and mother torment themselves and me unnecessarily. I know more than the physicians know. Let me pass what yet remains to me of life in my own country, surrounded by you all.”

Alice looked earnestly in his countenance; she endeavoured to turn aside the melancholy presage which his words foreboded; but he resumed the conversation.

“My dear sister, you have a character of firmness, tempered by gentleness, which will enable you, I trust, to support our parents under their trials. But you will require it all; for your task, dear Alice, is a grievous one. However, there are yet bright days in store for you, I hope. As to myself, I was never very covetous of life: and since I learnt a fatal secret, which either you do not, or do not choose to know, and of which it is best you should remain ignorant as long as you can,—since, I say, that secret has been known to me, I have never had a wish to live.”

“Not for our dear parents' sake, Henry?”

“If I could have made them happy,—yes;—but as it is—no, Alice: *you* are the apple of their eye; you are the pearl of price to them.”

“We are equally dear to them, Henry. Oh! if you knew how my poor mother mourned over your absence,—how very bitter were the tears she shed,—how bitterer still those heart griefs, in which none might participate, you would not be so cruel, so undutious, as to say that your life is valueless to your parents?”

Lord Talbot replied:—“I do not mean to be disrespectful or unkind; still less, to dispute the will of the Most High. I am resigned to live or to die;—only remember, Alice, never abandon our mother, whatever temptations may assail you under specious disguises; and recollect, that parents are the dearest of all earthly relations; they are given to us but once.”

This, and many similar conversations, made Alice to conceive much more seriously of her brother's malady than any one else did. She forgot everything—even Colonel Leicester—to attend solely to the object of her duty and her affection. Others went and came in his apartment, but she never left him: a bed, erected in an adjoining room, allowed her to be his nurse during the night as well as the day; and often, when his attendants slept, her watchful ear heard the moan and the heavy breathing, whether of pain or of uneasiness, and hastened to place a pillow in a new position, or tender the liquid that allayed the parching thirst, or speak the word of cheerfulness and soothing; or utter the short prayer of faith, which, if not heard in the way it is wished by the blind suppliant, is never prayed in vain.

Thus passed night after night, and day after day, the medical attendants always framing their bulletin after the manner of the oracles of old, which would serve either way, as the exigency of the after-moment might require. Yet, why blame them? They say, and perhaps justly, that were they to lift the veil with which they cover the opinions they give, that the most interested, and those whose feelings are most deeply dependent on the issue of the malady on which they are called to pronounce, would be unfitted for the attendance on their patient which they wish to pay; and even their very lives may be placed in adequate danger with those on whom they are watching, if they were made acquainted with the real opinion of the medical attendants on every turn and in every stage of the disease. Let those, therefore, who are called upon to this sad and tender duty, remember to be indulgent to those whom they consult: it is best to go through the mournful task in a prayerful spirit, using all diligence; being instant in supplication, and leaving the issue to that Almighty Power, in whom alone are the issues of life and death. Oh! let the mourner

remember, how, when having pressed to hear the unbiassed opinion of others on the state of those most dear to us, we have involuntarily loathed the persons who spoke the truth without disguise. And when we have urged them to the utterance, we have unjustly hated them at the moment for that very sincerity which we forced from their lips. What can be said of such contradictory elements of human infirmity, unless it be to humble ourselves in the knowledge of our unreasonable feelings, and to bow low and kiss the chastening rod?

In the course of a long illness, the flux and reflux of hope is ever changing, ever buoying us up on high, or sinking us into despair. For many days together, Lord Talbot's appearance was such as to deceive even those best versed in the fluctuations of the disease; and Lord and Lady Howard were completely blinded as to his danger. The former, more especially, seemed to take particular pleasure in forming schemes for the future, and settling what he would do next spring.

A cruise would be the surest way in the world to restore Henry's health; they would go to Naples, and bask in the southern sunshine; then return to the north of Italy, before the weather became too hot, and Henry would have it in his power to pursue his love of arts in southern climes.

There was no end to the schemes Lord Howard formed of amusement. Sometimes his son entered into these with real or pretended interest, but often a shade of gloom was visible on his countenance, when he spoke of such plans; and it distressed both Lady Howard and his sister, to hear his father pursuing his own chimeras with all the impetuosity of his sanguine temperament, regardless of that more awful warning which might have made him pause, and remember how impotent are our wills—how frail our hopes—how utterly it is beyond our ken to say what a day may bring forth.

While such were the false hopes and presumptuous plans of Lord Howard, his wife saw through a very different medium into futurity. Her conscience was perpetually reproaching her as being the cause of her son's illness: it was owing to his wounded feelings on her account, that he had left his home; that he had plunged into an alternate course of study and of exercise, equally hurtful to him; that he had courted that excitement of feeling, in short, which brought on his malady; and she thought it was impossible for her to humble herself

sufficiently, in order to avert the wrath of Heaven by penitence and prayer. The mother was ever abject to her own son; a suppliant for his affection; a positive beggar on his bounty, for that filial love which every parent has a right to command—every parent, who has not to blush before their own offspring! But she drank the very lees of wretchedness, and dared not even say, “This is hard!” If ever woman did, she bore her dishonour meekly; but tears, nor prayers, nor humiliation, were permitted to be of avail in restoring to her—her son!

He became rapidly worse; she saw that he was to be taken from her.—Not so Lord Howard: to the very last, he spoke as though his child was to live; he spoke so, though the conviction was at his heart, and before his eyes, that Lord Talbot was dying. But even to such mourners, we may extend commiseration, for they are maddened by despair; they are not of the schooled in sorrow, the chastened, or the holy, who bow to afflicting dispensations; and that very circumstance is an additional reason why they should be pitied.

Lord Talbot died a peaceful death. His mother and sister watched over him to the last. His father came to the door of his apartment every moment, but he could not endure to look upon his dying child; he asked how his son was going on, and answered himself, saying, “Yes, he is better;” then rushed away again, and rode or walked like a madman.

Grief takes many shapes;—who can prescribe to its modes or degrees?—but, certainly, some griefs appear to flow from a more selfish source than others. We are shocked at the violent, the unbending, murmuring, or arraigning mourner; but weep with our whole hearts for those who weep the silent tears of uncomplaining anguish.

Lord Howard’s misery quickly exhausted its violence, but it took, soon afterwards, another turn; one more offensive still to look upon, were it not that it was known to be, as it were, grief travestied; odious, indeed, to behold, but still grief in all its anguish. This fashion of woe was, with him, an assumption of total forgetfulness. No one was to mention Lord Talbot’s name in his presence; no allusion whatever was to be made to him, no more than if he had never existed.

Very soon after the fatal event, Lord Howard expected the family to meet at the regular hour of meals; some guests were invited; and that his wife should do the honours of the table; and his daughter should smile and converse as usual. In regard to himself, he affected an ease of manner which must have been

perfectly insufferable, even to the most hardened or indifferent spectator, acquainted with his recent bereavement, had there not been a look of suffering, and an occasional expression of wretchedness, which burst forth under all this masquerade, and rendered the disguise only the more apparent.

During the whole of Lord Talbot's long illness, Colonel Leicester had been unwearied in his attentions to Lord Howard: he had felt *for* and *with* him. These two rare unisons of sympathy, which alone renders it a balm to the wounded spirit, were, in Colonel Leicester's case, bestowed upon Lord Howard in all their warmth of feeling.

Those who feel *for* ourselves only on such occasions, bestow no welcome cordial to the sinking heart. We want some one, to feel *with* us—to feel *for* the dear lost one—to enter into our love for them. Our friend must have *loved* the departed; and even then, what is the love of the whole world, to that *one* powerful tie which made the lost one a part of ourselves! Weep, weep! sad lonely eyes, and bleed a long and sanguinary course of sorrow; yet still look up, all true mourners! and be comforted in the assurances that are given you of comfort and of mercy.

“Not to the grave. O power, of wondrous grace!

Direct the mourner's dark despairing eye;

Not in that loathsome, that terrific place,

Whence shrinking nature turns instinctively.

But strong in faith of a Redeemer's love,

See heaven's own portals opening from above.

“See the glad day shining from on high,

Brighten the dreary darkness of the tomb;

When death shall swallowed be in victory,

And all come forth to meet th' appointed doom.

Then with the angel host our loved one see,

Rise 'mong the heavenly throng, exultingly!”

CHAPTER XI.

Is it a mother's part to wile
 The heart, out of her offspring's breast,
 And place it on a funeral pile,
 Where pride a bed of thorns has drest?
 Is it a mother's love *can* see
 The slow consuming of that heart,
 And triumph in that agony,
 Nor writhe to see its cruel smart?
 Yes! pride can quench a mother's love,
 And turn the heart to stone.
 For nature has no power to move
 Those who are pride's alone.

MS.

PARENTS, mothers in particular, who think they have gained the mastery over their sons, should remember, that if the cord even of affection is pulled too tight it will break.

Lady Margaret Leicester had had sufficient power to prevent Colonel Leicester's marriage with Lady Alice Talbot, but not to eradicate his love for her; and he, on his part, had felt himself estranged from Lady Margaret, more even than he cared to avow, since her treacherous show of friendship towards the object of his affections, which had been followed up by so much bitterness, and such undeviating enmity to the Howards, proved to him that her conduct proceeded more from an adherence to her own prejudices, than from a real affection towards himself. Though Colonel Leicester was not altogether without prejudice, (who is?) yet he had more manly freedom of thought, more of what is truly great and good in character than his mother; which enabled him to distinguish between a love of virtue, and a slavish adherence to its ceremonial laws; and had in consequence avoided her presence, to escape hearing a repetition of dry axioms which he knew by rote, if not by heart, as much as from a desire to avoid coming to an open rupture with her. Yet he felt that he would rather go anywhere than to his mother; and this melancholy but sure effect of a conduct which she had adopted on principle, and maintained from obstinacy, nearly made them total strangers.

Lady Margaret certainly regretted her son's absence as much as she could regret any thing; but there are some persons who are wound up like clock-work, and go on living supinely

from day to day, satisfied that they are fulfilling the ordination of their existence—and perhaps they are. Accordingly, whether she was more or less pleased,—(happy was a word that neither entered her vocabulary or her comprehension)—whether she was more or less pleased, Lady Margaret portioned out the hours of her day, applying them to her several occupations, just as she would have done had her son been in constant intercourse with her, and following them up with a diligence and care which in any one else would have been a merit, but in her, and with her narrow views, was rather the effect of habit, than a praiseworthy volition of usefulness. She was actuated merely by a routine of regularity and order, which degenerated into becoming a piece of mechanism, that performed its effects, independently of all outward circumstances, and was not deserving of the commendation which a wise application of time merits. One of her employments, which she exalted into the sphere of duty, was working a certain quantity of needlework daily throughout the year, (Sundays and Fast-days excepted) on a very ugly piece of tapestry, forming squares and stars of precise dimensions, in every possible combination of the most hideous colours. Nay, it may be questioned if this very absence of all charm did not render the work the more meritorious in her estimation; and she felt a complacency in supposing that this proof of patient industry would be handed down from generation to generation, as a sample of the domestic virtues, and an heir-loom to her descendants.

It was while engaged in this laborious nothingness, that her son came into the room without being announced, and caused his mother to start from her seat, and utter an exclamation of astonishment at seeing him; but, nevertheless, the first surprise over, pleasure was evidently the chief feeling she experienced.

“Why, Leicester, it is so very long since you have come near me, that I thought I should never behold you again;” and she looked reproachfully at him. “How are you?” she added, taking hold of his hand, and clasping it affectionately in her own.

But Colonel Leicester returned not the pressure, and remained silent for a few moments, whilst Lady Margaret went on to say, looking anxiously in his face as she observed his distressed countenance and worn-out appearance, and she was thrown off her usual measured expression.

“What is the matter, Leicester?—tell me, for God’s sake; are you ill?”

"No, I am not ill,—I am quite well, thank you.—Nothing, Ma'am, I assure you, nothing."

"No, Leicester, that is not true; I am sure there is something the matter with you."

"If you do not believe me, I cannot help it," he replied pettishly, and turned away, and looked out of the window.

Lady Margaret grew angry.

"I am sure I do not wish to know any of your secrets, Leicester; but I think it would be better for you if you were less reserved with your mother, and had less confidence in strangers: however, I am used to this change in you *now*, though it is a sad change to me. Ah! Leicester, you'll not be the happier for forsaking your mother, and keeping company with such people as the——."

If the former part of this speech softened Colonel Leicester, the last words provoked him, and he stamped his foot on the ground, and muttered, with suffocating rage.

"This is too bad, too cruel; I will not listen to it;" and his hand was on the lock of the door, as he prepared to leave the room, but Lady Margaret went after him, and besought him not to go so soon away from her.

"I will not say any thing to vex you; I promise you, dear Leicester; I will not, so come back;" and at the moment she was sincere, and did not intend to utter any thing more that was cross and unpleasant; but Lady Margaret could not help saying disagreeable things, especially about the Howards.

Colonel Leicester consented to her entreaties; and reseating himself by the fire, he tore up her supply of neatly twisted pink and blue matches, and scattered them over the hearth-rug, whilst his mother watched him all the while.

"Will you dine with me?" she asked him, after some little time had passed in silence.

"I do not know," was his reply.

Lady Margaret was puzzled to guess what could occasion her son's strange manner. Had Lord Howard and he quarrelled?—an event to which she had always looked forward with eager hope, as a means of extricating him from the snare of the fowler, as she termed the Howard family—was Lady Alice going to be married? Still more fortunate, she thought—an event devoutly to be wished, though scarcely to be believed; but of all the suppositions that crossed her imagination, it never entered into her mind to think it possible that Colonel Leicester was in distress for the grief of his beloved—it never occurred to her that Lord Talbot's death could produce such an effect on *her* son; she asked him, therefore,

“Will you take some refreshment? Will you eat any thing now? Shall I send for some curaçoa, or an egg beat up with wine, or some soup? for you look tired.”

“I dare say I do; but what signifies talking about it—I would rather not have any thing, thank you.”

Lady Margaret shook her head, with an expression of astonishment at his refusal of all her kind offers, and recommenced working assiduously.

“How high the wind was last night—it blew down one of my chimneys, and I was obliged to get up out of bed; and awaken the servants to see what was the matter—it made such a noise; I thought the whole house had blown down.”

“Yes, the wind was very high, I observed, about four this morning.”

Lady Margaret lifted up her eyes from her work, and fixed them on her son.

“Were you up at four this morning? what made you rise so early? no wonder you look tired.”

“It is not surprising that I should, for I have been watching, till an hour ago, by poor Talbot’s death-bed—he died a little after five this day.”

“What! *he* is dead,” she said quickly. “Poor young man! that is fortunate; for with the story of his birth attached to him, he never could have enjoyed this life. Well—so there is an end of the Howard peerage—that is to say, in the direct line: the next heir is an eccentric character—a miser—a low man, living no one knows where, or how. The direct race is spun out; and no wonder, when there has been such coarse yarn interwoven in it. Such alliances never bring forth good fruit—bad must come of them. Doubtless, Lord Howard and his daughter are in great distress—did he suffer much, Leicester? Poor young man!”

During this speech Colonel Leicester had bit his lips with anger, till he had almost made the blood come, and he answered,

“If *you* cannot feel compassion for your fellow-creatures in sorrow, at least pray say nothing about them—not to me, at all events; I will not hear such brutal observations.”

“How you are infatuated, my poor Leicester, with these people; how they have deceived *you*! and made you to believe them perfection. This much I will say,” her choler rising as she spoke, “I feel my mouth polluted by mentioning her name. Lady Howard is a whited sepulchre, fair outside, but foul within; and her daughter is in reality a very artful young lady, in spite of all her semblance of ingenuousness and meek-

ness. I think I had some pretty good traits of that fact. As to Lord Howard, he *has* been a weak, unprincipled, licentious man in his early years, and is now an ill-tempered, tyrannical one; ashamed, as he well may be, of himself and all those belonging to him. In regard to Lord Talbot, I know nothing about him; but that such is the general character of this family with whom you are so infatuated, is certain, and I must confess it grieves me to see you enthralled by them. Lady Alice Talbot's refusal of your hand when you proposed to her, was a mere pretence, in order to obtain you upon higher terms; she only did so because she thought it was a means of making you more enamoured of her. She has acted very artfully, and I am sorry to see, with too much success; but I suppose it is vain to speak to you on this subject, so I will *say* no more;—*as to feeling*, I shall never cease *to feel* that they have taken you away from me, and that is an injury which it is a duty to resent."

There was, in Lady Margaret, a mingled affection for her son, with a haughty self-love conjoined, and a hatred of the Howard family, which, like religious persecution, was inextinguishable, because it assumed the garb of a virtuous abhorrence of vice, that produced an odious result altogether, and of course estranged Colonel Leicester from her more and more. The oftener she expressed her prejudiced abuse of them, the oftener was he reminded not to suffer himself to be biassed by her opinions, and he replied.

"My dear mother, you will not change your notions concerning the Howards, neither shall I mine. Of this rest assured: all I request of you is, that you will not name either Lord or Lady Howard, or their daughter, nor the late Lord Talbot to me. I do not wish to be roused into angry feelings towards you, or betrayed into disrespectful language towards my mother; but I will not tamely listen to such narrow prejudice,—such harsh, and, as I conceive, false opinion of persons whom I value above all the world besides."

"Very well, Colonel Leicester! I hear it from your own lips, your mother is nothing to you"—and the thrill of anguish reddened her eyelids, and convulsed her features, but she restrained the bitter tear which she scorned to shed.

"Do not, my dear mother—do not, I beseech you," and he took her hand, for he too was touched, "be so unjust to me, so disparaging to yourself. I both love and honour you as a son should do a parent. *How much* I honour you, has been proved in the most momentous concern of my life. I have very nearly sacrificed my whole happiness in existence to you; if

you are not satisfied with this irrefragable proof, words can avail me nothing; but at least, for such filial forbearance, I am entitled to expect in return some motherly sympathy—forbear, therefore, to wound or taunt me unnecessarily; and now, for the present, adieu. I am weary, and going to attempt to rest; but do not expect to see much of me till after Lord Talbot's funeral, which will take place this day week; it is, by his own request, to be strictly private, and without any pomp whatsoever; but I have entreated to be allowed to attend, and I hope I may be of some comfort to Lord Howard."

"Well, I am sure you are very good—very kind, Leicester."

"Neither the one or the other; I am merely obeying an impulse of common humanity and duty in showing respect to the memory of my friend, and to the feelings of his remaining relations."

"Very true—but under circumstances——."

Colonel Leicester made a movement of impatience.

"I do hope," she added quickly, desirous to give her meaning a different one from that which she really intended, "I do hope, my dear son, you will take care of yourself. I shall be sadly anxious. You know more deaths have occurred from attending funerals than almost from any other cause. I pray you have a care."

Colonel Leicester waited not to hear the exordium out, but burst away, wearied and disgusted, to follow the bent of his own inclinations.

When the last melancholy, yet (to Christians) consolatory duties had been paid to the remains of Lord Talbot; when the family of the Howards sat down and looked sadly at each other, and thought, "it is then all over, nothing remains for us to do, nothing but to suffer;" they experienced that blank which is one of the many various stages of grief that the bereaved have to pass through. Lord Howard, sooner than his wife and daughter, roused himself to active employments, all tending to hallow the memory of the departed, in his own peculiar way, but to which some mourners cannot at first, if ever, apply for relief. He had Lord Talbot's bust and picture executed by all the best artists in London, and would drive from one to the other of their studios with a restlessness and anxiety, which took no hue from resigned sadness; and when of necessity these occupations ceased, he was fractious like a wayward child to those who, concentrated in their wretchedness, owned no relief from outward circumstances.

Yet let not persons who do not feel with Lord Howard, refrain from feeling for him.

Grief has as many shades of various tints as joy; as many outlets, as many degrees as there are various and varying features of countenance. Complexions—temperaments—habits—hardly any two people suffer alike. God apportions to each their quota; but under all its modifications, anguish is anguish still, and cannot be evaded. The proud, like the humble,—the gay, like the serious, when their hour comes, are bowed low; for man is born to sorrow as the sparks fly upwards.

Colonel Leicester's assiduous attentions to Lord Howard could not, after a considerable time elapsed, prevent his reflecting upon the consequences which his perpetual presence must have, if not on the happiness of his daughter, at least on her reputation; and he determined to open the subject once more to him.

They had been taking a drive in an open barouche to Box-hill, and in walking over that beautiful country, Lord and Lady Howard had accidentally gone on before, and left Lady Alice and Colonel Leicester alone.

When the latter rejoined them, Colonel Leicester's countenance had assumed a deeper gloom, and the traces of recent weeping were visible on his companion's.

The drive home passed in silence.

When Lord Howard found himself alone with Colonel Leicester, he remarked these circumstances, and said: "I have now only one child; you cannot be surprised that her happiness should make me overpass the bounds of delicacy, and ask you to tell me whether you believe you have any interest in her heart, and on what plea she refused your honourable offers of marriage? Was it that she felt she could not return your love, or was it some fancy, such as women have, that makes them forego the happiness which is within their power.

"I am overstepping, perhaps, even the right a father has on the score of a child's interest, in thus questioning you, Colonel Leicester; but the bitter loss I have sustained makes me doubly alive to every circumstance which is likely to bear on Alice's fate, and I appeal to you as an honourable man, one in whom I place implicit confidence, and who is, I believe, my friend, to tell me what you know concerning my daughter's affections. In every instance of her life she has been the most dutiful, the most obedient of children, but she is reserved on this one subject,—the reason why she refused you; and it has appeared to me unlike her, that she should show you so much preference by a thousand nameless attentions, while she discarded your suit.

Every word Lord Howard uttered went to Colonel Leicester's heart. He hesitated, and felt that whether he spoke the truth, or remained silent he should equally offend. At length, however, he determined to be sincere, cost what it might.

"I perhaps flatter myself too much, when I say I indulge a hope that Lady Alice is not wholly averse to my proposal. But she is too dignified, too good, too pure, to like to become the wife of a man whose mother's prejudices and unjust prepossessions render her inimical to our union. This I believe to be the cause of Lady Alice's rejection of me."

Colonel Leicester breathed quick, and thought he had managed that difficult business with as much delicacy as the nature of the case admitted. But Lord Howard looked him very steadily in the face, and replied:—

"If this, indeed, be a true statement, you are acting a dishonourable part in keeping up an interest in her affections, while you are convinced that she never can, consistently with her idea of propriety, become your wife; and from this instant, Colonel Leicester, whatever regret I may feel at losing your society, I must request never to see you within my doors after this night."

Colonel Leicester bit his lip, drew himself up to his full towering height, and replied:—

"If any other man had treated me thus, except yourself, Lord Howard, I should not be inclined to waive a further explanation of such unjust allegations, certainly not without an attempt on my part, to exonerate myself from the charge of having acted dishonourably;—but from you, my Lord, from Lady Alice's father,—it is different. I bow to your behest, and ask no questions."

"To accuse you of *intentional* dishonour, I never did, Colonel Leicester; but I must think that man cold-blooded, and undeserving the worth of a first and innocent attachment, who would resign Alice's hand for any unreasonable prejudice, even that of a parent. Besides, what prejudice can your mother have, to make her find fault with Alice?"

"No, my lord, I am not cold-blooded; although I do not allow my own selfish wishes to make me induce the object of my affections to act a part unworthy of her. I feel for her honour as for my own. I would not make her amenable even to my own mother's animadversions and reproaches."

Again, Colonel Leicester thought he had warded off any direct allusion to Lady Howard, and he rejoiced at having escaped that painful part of his task. But Lord Howard, forgetting his own and his wife's position, was tenacious of his

imagined superiority, and demanded peremptorily what were Lady Margaret's prejudices, and how they could be of a nature to produce disapprobation of Colonel Leicester's marriage with his daughter.

The latter looked at him with an expression of deep concern; and with whatever anger he might have been disposed to resent Lord Howard's treatment, that feeling gave way to a very different sentiment, when he beheld him quite unconscious of the real cause of Lady Margaret's obstinate refusal to grant her consent to his marriage with Lady Alice.

So true it is, that some persons actually forget that they have placed themselves in a situation to draw down the scorn or the blame of the world, or if they do remember their delinquencies, there is something in their own peculiar case which, they think, alters the nature of the offence, and entitles *them* to a more lenient award.

Colonel Leicester saw that the first of these was the error into which Lord Howard had fallen; and he preferred to endure any personal affront towards himself, rather than wound him further—rather than be the person who was to awaken Lord Howard from his forgetfulness.

“But, again, the latter asked angrily:—“Pray, sir, what right has Lady Margaret to object to my daughter?”

“Oh! she has no objection—she *can* have no objection to Lady Alice; but——”

“Well, be explicit, I entreat you.—What *do* you mean? to what *do* you allude?”

“Force me not, my lord, to hurt your feelings and my own.—Why make me utter what are not *my* sentiments, but those of my mother?”

“Yes, sir, I do ask you, as a man of honour, to tell me, in plain words, why Lady Margaret Leicester refuses to give her consent to your marriage with Alice?”

There was no possibility of evading a painful reply, and he answered:—

“Lady Margaret Leicester does not choose the daughter of a divorced woman should become *her* daughter.”

Lord Howard started up, clenched his hands, and struck them on his forehead with violence; then gave way to a paroxysm of a rage and grief, which lessened the tenderness with which Colonel Leicester had lately participated in his feelings, but made him fear for the consequence of his ungovernable temper. He remained, therefore, with him, patiently awaiting till a pause in his violence afforded him an opportunity of offering such palliatives as he conceived most likely to soothe

him. But all would not do ; and, finally, Lord Howard rushed out of the room, leaving Colonel Leicester alone.

Having waited some time, in case he should return, and finding he did not, and that it was very late, he went sorrowfully away, hardly expecting that he should ever be allowed to enter that house again.

Lady Howard had gone early to bed that evening, having been more unwell than usual ; but although she had hoped to obtain rest, she had not yet slept when Lord Howard entered her room. She had been thinking over the past, as well as on those more recent and agonizing hours which she had gone through ;—at what hour, at what moment, does every circumstance recur to our memories so distinctly as at the *nominal hour of rest*? Her first marriage day—Lord Vernon—Lord Stuart—that first life of *her* life, when every hope shone brightest in imagination, but all proved defective or utterly abortive in reality : then her second life—for so that portion of her existence might be called—with all its stormy joys, its guilty fears, its hopeless sorrows—then of Lord Howard's passionate love, his subsequent tyranny, the thousand mortifications she had endured in a thousand different shapes, not only from the world, but from himself—

“ And hard unkindness' alter'd eye,
That mocks the tear it forced to flow.”

The day in which her child's heart was first made to feel the retribution due to its mother's crime, when Lady Alice wept for the loss of Fanny Harcourt's friendship—her own humiliation before her son—his illness—the alternate changes of hope and fear for his life, which had reigned in her heart for the last months of his existence—and finally his death, and the agony she felt when she saw him taken from her—all these images crowded in upon Lady Howard's mind, rendering sleep impossible ; but when at length her husband opened the curtain, and looked to ascertain whether or not she was awake, he found her dosing in that unquiet sleep which follows overwrought feeling, and he saw that her pillow was wet with her tears. Tears were coursing down her cheeks, and harsh lines of care were imprinted on her countenance that he had never observed before.

Lady Howard had exhausted herself with weeping, and was just in the act of dropping into slumber, when the light which Lord Howard held roused her, and with that fear of evil which those who have long been awaiting some dreaded event (particularly those who have been watching a dying

person), and expect to hear that the sick one is worse, or that they are gone—Lady Howard, forgetting that this event *was* past, and that she no longer awaited such a summons, started up, exclaiming, “I am coming directly;” then jumped out of bed, and seizing the light her husband held, was rushing past him to go to the room where her son had died—

“Laura, it is only I,” Lord Howard said, calling to her.

Then Lady Howard remembered all—remembered that her son was dead—the confusion which comes over the mind between sleeping and waking was in a moment cleared away, and she replied, “Oh, yes! very true—I had forgot—here I am, Howard—is it not late? are you come to bed?” and she looked at him with a vacant expression of wretchedness, which in his present mood only served to provoke him.

He saw in her only the cause which had been a barrier between him and prosperity—the object which reflected disgrace on him and his children. He thought not of her devotion to himself—he remembered not the days when she had been the delight of his life—he considered not the pangs, the humiliations, the numberless trials, she had gone through, in order to become his wife—nay, he even forgot the anguish which he had so lately shared with her, and he replied, in a loud angry voice, “Coming to bed! no, there is no rest for me.”

Lady Howard’s nerves had been much weakened by constant agitation; and the want of sleep while watching over her departed son, rendered her feeble in body as in mind. Lord Howard’s angry tone made her tremble, and she sunk on the bed by which she was standing.

“What is the matter?” she inquired timidly.

“The matter is, that cursed old devil, Lady Margaret, will not permit Colonel Leicester to marry *your* daughter, madam; and her conceited, consequential son, has at last made known to me his determination not to disgrace himself by marrying Alice.”

This was not true; but Lord Howard had lost his temper; and persons seldom repeat a conversation literally, to a third party, when they are in a rage. He continued—

“It was an honourable declaration, truly, after having made love to her for the last twelve-month, and even proposed; but because the poor, foolish girl would not listen to his mean bargaining about not seeing *you* as often or as freely as she wished, he thought he had a plausible excuse to be off with her altogether—scoundrel that he is! He shall never enter this house again. My poor Alice! she has you to thank, madam, for this pleasant business. It is a pity a man finds out, when it is too

late, that he has marred his fortunes for ever. I have never repented my folly but once, and that has been ever since the date of its commission.

Lady Howard heard this cruel taunting, as she had done a thousand times before, in meek silence, and in inward prayer she had again laid her weary head on the pillow, and even tried, in the midst of the storm, to lull herself into the temporary forgetfulness, by falling into such sleep as those alone know who, like her, endure, it may be, merited suffering for past crimes, but unmerited from the being by whom it is inflicted.

“What, madam, you are sleeping, are you?—by heaven that is too bad! but I will teach you what it is to be indifferent to your husband’s wretchedness, to your children’s misery and dishonour. You have occasioned the death of one, perhaps you may also that of the other; and you sleep,—do you, when I place these truths before you? Charming innocent! you pretend to be composed and serene,—do you, while you see me raving like a madman?”

“I am anything but composed, anything but serene: I feel as if my life was fleeting fast away—would to God it was gone!”

“Mighty fine all this high-flown language, truly! very romantic and interesting, I doubt not—quite suited to the Minerva Press: but madam, at your age, and in your circumstances, something else is called for than the affected sentiment of a girl of fifteen.”

“Good heaven! Howard, how can I pacify you? what can I say? where find words of meaning that will soothe you? You may trample me under your feet—you may bestow every dreadful name upon me, and I will not turn and defend myself. I plead guilty—guilty from my very soul; but not guilty of want of love for you: with my dying breath I will testify that no truer devotion was ever felt for mortal than that with which I have served you, and sacrificed myself to you. If I did not speak to you before, it was because I hoped my silence might allay your wrath; and now that I have spoken, it is only to repeat what you know so well already. I *am* your true and faithful wife, whatever I have been to others.”

Lord Howard made no reply. He could not make any that would have justified his own violence and brutality, and so he went to bed, and to sleep *directly*, as men can do, though they have caused all sleep to fly from their wretched partners.

Are such scenes true to nature or not? Alas!

CHAPTER XII.

“ Yet can I not persuade me thou art dead,
 Or that thy corse corrupts in earth’s dark womb—
 Or that thy beauties lie in wormy bed,
 Hid from the world in a low delved tomb ;—
 Could heaven for pity thee so strictly doom ?
 Oh ! no, for something in thy face did shine
 Above mortality, that show’d thou wast divine.”

MILTON.

WHEN the tidings of Lord Talbot’s death reached Paris, Lord Stuart felt it deeply. It seemed to him as though it awoke a new sense for his mother ; and drew him closer to her, although she had ceased to be a mother to him : but now, he thought, now I am her only son ; she must remember me now, if she has never thought of me before. Oh ! would that I could be near her—could dry her tears—could tell her that she has still a son who loves her dearly, as dearly, perhaps, as the favourite whom she has lost. Dear Talbot, noble creature ! so he is gone in the prime and bloom of his early career. Well, at least I loved him as a brother should, and *he* knew I did : we felt for each other. Alice, too, my sister—why may I not see her ? why not tell her all these natural feelings of regret and affection, but I may not—oh ! my father. Why should such cruel contradictions destroy all the social affections ? why should it offend my father that I love my mother and her children ? and yet it must be so. Yes, I feel the bitter consequences of a parent’s error, but not the contumely or scorn with which it inspires others.

Lord Stuart’s grief was genuine, and his feelings were of the most true and kind nature.

Lord Vernon saw through the constraint he put upon himself to appear cheerful in his presence, and loved him the more that he was unable to disguise them.

To one person only did Lord Stuart dare to open his whole soul on this subject—to Fanny Harcourt, who participated warmly in that confidence. Glad of an apology for tears, hers flowed as it were for *him* ; but they were, in truth, occasioned by that deep-rooted love which she had felt for the late Lord Talbot. She shut herself up from all society ; would see no one except Lord Stuart ; and told her mother, without disguise, that her every hope of happiness was gone.

Lady Harcourt lamented and lectured, and complained to sundry old ladies of the sad effects produced by careless governesses when walking in squares, who allowed their pupils to make acquaintances which might affect their future lives.

“I am sure I cannot blame myself; for the moment I knew of my Fanny having become acquainted with the Howard children, I broke off the connection directly. Yet you see, my dear friend, it was too late; the seed was sown, and there is Fanny making herself wretched about that young man, who never cared for her. Well, I cannot understand it.”

The only consolation Lady Harcourt had was in thinking that Lord Stuart might, in time, grow from being a consoler to her daughter's grief, the successor in her love; she therefore did not use any violent efforts to dissuade Fanny Harcourt from her present mode of life, and played the convenient mamma to perfection; “hoping,” as she expressed it to her very particular friend, “that good might come of it.”

After Colonel Leicester left Howard House, he felt that he could never enter it again unless as the accepted lover of Alice, and he determined that nothing should be left untried on his part to bring about this event, on the success of which he was sure his happiness depended. He went, therefore, to his mother, and she saw, the first moment she looked at his countenance, that he was about to reproach her.

“My dear son,” she said, endeavouring to deprecate his wrath, “whatever I may have done or said that has displeased you, has nevertheless been the result of affection for you; the consequences of those principles of duty which my parents, and theirs before them, have handed down unsullied and unbroken to us. Yet my weakness is so great” — (and Lady Margaret's voice faltered as she said this) — “that since I found myself losing your affection, I have questioned whether I did not carry my system too far — whether I might not give way to my child's wishes, without incurring any blame — and, finally, I am determined to yield to your determination, and receive Lady Alice Talbot as my daughter-in-law.”

“Madam,” replied Colonel Leicester, “this condescension on your part comes too late. There was a time when it might have rendered me blessed; but now I am turned out of Lord Howard's house, and I must allow he has had reason for forbidding me his presence. He accuses me of dishonour — of winning his daughter's affections, while at the same time I made such proposals as she could not consistently with her duty and love for her parents accept. And it is true, madam, it is

too true, I feel myself to be justly condemned; and it is my own mother, who has brought me into this state of misery and self reproach; I am therefore determined to go to the Continent, and endeavour to get into some public career, no matter what, which may employ me for years, till age may blunt the feelings of youth. I think it my duty to tell you this, and to add, that although I must ever remember you are my mother, yet joined to that remembrance, will always be attached the idea that you have blighted my hopes, and crushed my heart."

"Leicester, my son, my only child, hear me! I will do anything, everything, to regain your affection; everything to bring about that which I have so strenuously opposed hitherto. I beseech you, remain in England. Leave me to manage the business, and await the result of my endeavours, at least before you resort to any extreme measures. If you ever had any respect, any affection for me, I conjure you to grant me this request."

Colonel Leicester listened to his mother's proposal, and finally gave her his promise that he would not quit England.

No sooner was Colonel Leicester out of sight, than Lady Margaret thought, "Ah! it is a sad price, though, that I have paid for this concession on his part;—the daughter of a divorced woman! What would Lady Priscilla Leicester" (that was his grandmother, looking up at a picture of her, which hung over the fire-place), "what would Lady Priscilla Leicester have said to such a union? Well, but now-a-days these things are quite common"—(as if she was apostrophising the picture)—"the more's the pity. Well! I have given Leicester my promise to get him reinstated in Lord Howard's good opinion, and make him the husband of Lady Alice. Must I then go and unsay all I have said to the girl? Must I go and visit Lady Howard? Dreadful pollution! Horrid degradation!"

But Lady Margaret recollected that she had a tool to make use of which would spare her the first mortification; and as for the last, "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." Besides, she thought, many things fall out between the cup and the lip. The marriage is not settled yet. Thus, to the last, did she reserve a hope against hope, that her endeavours to bring about the union might fail. And now she sent for her cat's-paw, Miss Agar, who came quickly to the summons.

Lady Margaret explained the reason of her having requested an interview, and detailed the foregoing conversation with her son, only coloured after her own manner; she summed up all by saying,

“You will understand that there would be much indelicacy in my going in my own person to discourse with Lady Alice; but you, my dear Miss Agar, with that taste and propriety which is so peculiarly your own, and for which you have been always famed in every business in which you have taken a part, will explain to the family how ready I am to enter into my son’s views, and that I hope no unnecessary delays will take place, but that Colonel Leicester may be permitted to plead his own suit immediately. Remember, my dear Miss Agar,”—and she spoke eagerly, heartily,—“remember, my happiness depends upon this, because I love my son, and shall lose his affections altogether, if I do not succeed.”

How strange! and still an under-current of a contrary nature was lurking within her. What an unaccountable anomaly is the human heart!

“Thank you, Miss Agar, thank you, for promising to undertake the arrangement of this affair,” said Lady Margaret, in reply to Miss Agar’s consent. “I shall never forget the obligation. I am sure it is very kind—very friendly in you to do so.”

“No thanks, my dear Lady Margaret, no thanks. If I am successful in arranging this matter comfortably for you, I shall be very happy. Adieu for the present—depend on my losing no time; and Miss Agar hurried out of the house, and walked briskly down——street with that peculiar air, for which she was so famous, and which had, in her youth, caused the passengers in a foreign country to exclaim “*Quelle marche de déesse*,” but the light trip which she still assumed, suited her far less well than it had once done; and the occasional totter was ill concealed by the affected airiness of tread.

As was usual, Miss Agar did not escape observation while on her way to Howard House, for her dress and appearance were too singular not to attract attention. Her figure had preserved its erectness; it was still slight, and her feet and ankles had lost little of their beauty. She always wore very short petticoats, and a particular shaped shoe of a light colour, tying with a bow in the front; but her face evinced the ravages of time, and presented a pitiable spectacle of artificial youth. Her cheeks, cracked and parched, were literally formed into furrows, in which rouge and pearl powder were deposited like mud in a gutter. Her gray eyebrows were coarsely blackened, giving a fierce expression to her countenance, and on her head was placed an enormous mass of black wig, formed into bows and curls like cannon on a fortification. A small white beaver hat, with a profusion of white feathers, waving, as she thought,

gracefully around in all directions, was her favourite head-gear, and crowned the whole of her singular attire. Thus accoutred, Miss Agar set forth on her mission; but during her walk, her mind was not idle; she reviewed every circumstance which had come to her knowledge respecting the Howards, and Colonel Leicester's attachment to Lady Alice, and, after much deliberation with herself, so deeply was she engrossed in weaving toils for the unhappy objects of her hatred that, contrary to her usual custom, she passed by several acquaintances without recognizing them, a rare occurrence to Miss Agar, who never let any one she knew go by in the street without stopping them, and turning them to some account, either by eliciting news from them, or disseminating her own, or requesting them to drop a letter for her (if they were going that way), or giving her a frank, or any other minor office which she could think of at the time; so that upon this occasion, the persons she met wondered what was the reason of Miss Agar's abstraction, and how she came to allow them to pass her with impunity. And as she walked by the club-houses, all the men expressed their astonishment that she had not, as was her custom, beckoned to any one of them to throw up the sash of the windows, and hold a conversation with her.

Arrived at Howard House, she felt somewhat fatigued, for it was a long walk for any one, and especially for a woman of her age.

However, Miss Agar's besetting sin was not indolence, or want of zealous perseverance in anything she purposed to do; in the present instance, she was too eager to execute the plan she had arranged on her way, to allow herself to think of personal fatigue.

"Is Lady Alice Talbot at home?" she inquired of the servants, resting her hands on her hips.

They could scarcely refrain from laughing at her ridiculous appearance, for Miss Agar was a stranger at Howard House, and not knowing who she was, and seeing her arrive on foot, and unattended by any of the liveried species, they answered with the insolence of many of that pampered tribe,—

"No—and if she was, pray what may *you* want with her ladyship?"

But Miss Agar took no notice of the impertinence of the reply, and only said, "I am come by appointment to see Lady Alice Talbot. Tell her that the Honourable Miss Agar is here," and she entered the house.

The footmen did not dare to question this authoritative as—

sertion, accompanied as it was by the action, and showed her into a room where Lady Howard was sitting alone.

"Shall I let Lady Alice know you are come, Ma'am?" asked the servant.

"If you please."

He shut the door, and Miss Agar was unexpectedly confronted with Lady Howard.

The latter was turning over the leaves of a music-book which lay by her as she was seated with her back to the door at the farthest end of a very long room. Her harp was before her, and not having heard the door of the ante-room open, she continued to strike a few desultory chords, apparently endeavouring to recall a half-forgotten melody. "Ah!—no," she said aloud, "it has passed away like all the rest."

Miss Agar looked at her for a few moments through her spying glass to ascertain if it *was* indeed Lady Howard she beheld, and to observe what ravages time and sorrow had made upon her since she last saw her. Should she go on and make herself known, or should she retire unperceived? She determined on the former, and coughed several times to announce her approach.

Lady Howard ceased playing, and turning round, beheld Miss Agar. The latter held out her hand.

"Laura, do not agitate yourself; it is I; but be not alarmed. I am not come to say anything unpleasant, but the reverse; however, it is owing to a mistake of your servants which has thus unexpectedly brought me into your presence. I did not intend to *see you*, my visit was to your daughter, Lady Alice; but never mind, we will talk of old stories. *Old stories!* those words have a strange power in them, have they not? Old circumstances set before us unexpectedly, as well as old friends, come, as it were, back from the dead, and are very often as fearful to us as spectres."

Miss Agar knew the effect these words would produce on the person to whom they were addressed, and therefore she uttered them.

But Lady Howard recoiled from the touch of her hand. She was too noble, too sincere, to pretend to retain any sentiment of friendship for Miss Agar, and she replied with self-composure:

Since it is owing to a mistake of my servants that I am indebted for the honour of seeing you, Miss Agar, I conclude you do not wish to prolong an interview which must be painful to both; and whatever other business you may have in this house, I request you will execute it speedily; in the meantime I

need not remain, as our meeting cannot be agreeable to either of us," and, curtseying, she prepared to leave the room, but Miss Agar laid her hand on Lady Howard's arm, and rejoined,—

"No, Laura, I entreat you to stay. I wish to converse with you on a subject which concerns your daughter's happiness; and since I have met you, although I intended to confine my communication to Lady Alice, it will be better that I avail myself of this opportunity to impress upon *your* mind certain facts with which I am made acquainted, and in which I may possibly be the means of serving you. Indeed, I have come on the part of Lady Margaret Leicester to explain matters which require the interference of a mutual friend, so do not go away. I will not touch on other subjects, I promise you: I will carefully avoid them," and she looked significantly at her.

Lady Howard dreaded a continuation of this interview. The very person of Miss Agar was hateful to her; but for her child's interests what would she not endure?—and she replied,

"If this is really the case; if Alice's happiness is concerned in what you have to communicate, I will remain. Will you not sit down?"

"Shall we not be interrupted?" questioned Miss Agar.

"No; Lord Howard and my daughter are both out."

"So much the better. Well, my dear Laura," resumed Miss Agar, in her familiar tone, "I am happy to see you so comfortable, and looking so well. Your deep mourning becomes you. There are few persons can bear it, and it is a pleasure to me to see you so well established," looking about the apartment; "indeed, I may say, surrounded by so much splendour. It gives me real pleasure, after considering all things, for many men to whom such sacrifices are made, are not always so grateful for them."

Lady Howard felt herself turn sick at heart, as she shrunk from Miss Agar's gaze, and heard these impertinent and false professions of an interest she knew she did not feel; but she remained silent, for she was in the presence of her who had witnessed the guilty part of her life, and she was abashed before the woman she despised; but she rallied her sinking spirits; she drew herself up to the full towering height of her stature, and tried, with answering gaze, to meet that of her false friend, but it would not do. Her eyes dropped on the ground—her cheeks were scorched with the blush of shame, and an alternate chill trickled through every vein, and seemed to concentrate the life blood of her heart.

"Poor Laura!" said Miss Agar. "Come, come, lay aside all restraint with me; it is of no use; let us be natural. Again al-

low me to assure you, it affords me real pleasure to see you are so comfortable, so happy, and really," she added, in her loud tone of voice, "still so handsome. I could not have believed it, for it is more than twenty years ago, Laura, since you and I met, and I feel sure you could not have preserved your good looks if you had been ill-used or miserable. I am agreeably surprised to find the rumours which are spread abroad are untrue, of my Lord's being tyrannical and ill-tempered. It is quite false I am certain; ay, to be sure. Is it not entirely without foundation?"

Lady Howard could not endure that one of the retributions due to her crime, namely, the violence and ungovernable temper of her husband, should be known to any one, much less to Miss Agar.

It is wonderful what some women will suffer rather than let the world know that they meet with the bitterest punishment for their follies or their crimes from the very object for whom they have been guilty of them. This silent endurance does not always arise from an amiable motive—it is more frequently owing to a wish of escaping the world's unfeeling scoff of—"She has met with her desert."

Both these feelings actuated Lady Howard when she answered Miss Agar's question, saying, "Howard is a good husband to me whatever rumour says to the contrary. Our children have been"—(her voice faltered, as she remembered that one "was not," and that the plural was now reduced to the singular number)—"all that is most duteous, most affectionate. Alice is a good child: I have every reason to be thankful for the blessings which are accorded to me."

I trust they may long continue to you, my *poor Law*; but I was sorry to hear of Lord Talbot's death; it loosens your hold over his father; and if you survive Lord Howard, he might have protected you in advancing years, when people begin to find old friends drop into the grave, and new ones become scarce: but perhaps you may yet have another heir."

Again Lady Howard's courage failed her, and her patience was nearly worn out; but she bore all, thinking that at last she might hear something which it imported Lady Alice's happiness to know; but not yet was she to come at this, for Miss Agar went on to say—

"It would be a pity the fine old place and title went to the miser who lives in a hovel, they say somewhere in Cornwall,—a strange, and altogether disgraceful character. How unlucky it could not, by any possible contrivance, devolve to your other son by your first husband! By the way, have you ever seen

Stuart of late? He is not handsome, but very like his father: something of an air and manner which is extremely fascinating, and he is a dear good creature: you really ought to love him—so kindly did he behave to his brother, so attentive to his poor father, who has never held up his head, as the saying is, since you left him, and is now fast declining into his dotage, I think. By the way, since we are upon this subject, I may as well tell you something about your former relatives, or rather your relative that *is*; for as to poor dear Lord Vernon, you never cared for him. But where was I—oh, I recollect. Concerning Lord Stuart, you know he is in love with la petite Fanny Harcourt; but she is not so with him. It is very odd, for what a marriage after all it would be for her to make! The Tinker's great-grand-child, absolutely her grandfather, made all his wealth by 'Have you any work for the tinker!' as the old song says. That is a curious story; I must tell it you some day, for now we have met, we must meet often, my poor Lau! To return.—Fanny Harcourt was in love, you know, with Lord Talbot: however, she misplaced her affections, for I believe he never cared for her; and now the best thing she can do is to transfer her affections to his brother. That puts me in mind—why did you not answer my letter which I wrote to you from Paris, announcing your son Talbot's illness? it was not like an old friend to leave that letter unanswered—it was not like you."

"At that time, Miss Agar, I had no thought of anything but of him: your letter, with many others, was cast aside, almost wholly forgotten."

This was not true: Miss Agar knew it was not, and replied:

"Ah! I know it is not always pleasant to *remember*; but never mind, do not be so confused; I was not angry, only vexed: but it is time to come to the main subject which brought me here."

Lady Howard thought it was more than time. She placed herself nearer to Miss Agar. Her countenance expressed the interest she felt.

"Of course you know there has long been a love affair between Lady Alice, your daughter, and Colonel Leicester: *I* do not much like him,—between us be it spoken,—but Lady Alice loves him, does she not?"

"Alice is so gentle, and has so much reticence, that I cannot answer you any further than by saying, I believe she is partial to Colonel Leicester; but would not, I am certain, allow any prepossession, however strong, to induce her to enter a family of which the parent or parents were averse to the alliance."

“Ay now, my poor Lau! we draw nigh to the point. You know, or do not know, as seems best to your discretion, that Colonel Leicester has proposed to your daughter, and has been refused. But perhaps now do *not* know *why* she refused him, not exactly; though the general outline of Lady Margaret’s disapprobation to her (as *your daughter*), for in every other respect she thinks Lady Alice unexceptionable, you are acquainted with. Now as I am certain you have nothing so much at heart as Lady Alice’s happiness, and that she is evidently pining away, I am come to tell you how you might ensure it. You are too sensible a woman not to bear a few unpleasant truths with patience, when your child’s felicity is at stake.

“The fact is, Old Lady Margaret Leicester is an antiquated piece of stiff starched propriety, who adheres to her own prejudices much more from obstinacy, than from any conviction of right or wrong; and she declared to her son, that she would readily consent to his marrying Lady Alice, providing only, she should never be asked to visit you, and that Colonel Leicester would give his word of honour, you should never see Lady Alice but in her husband’s presence. Now this is very foolish, very childish; but in truth, I believe she is growing into second childhood. Oh! she is such a bore,” shrugging up her shoulder, “still I think it is worth your while to consider whether you will waive your own prerogative in favour of your daughter’s happiness, and overlook this harsh determination regarding yourself; or, whether you will adhere to your *rights* as a mother, and forget your child’s interest.”

“I would forego any thing—every thing for Alice—endure every thing—but I am certain, that being acquainted with the terms by which she has to procure Lady Margaret’s consent, she would scorn to purchase any selfish felicity at such a price. Besides, Alice is in ignorance of her mother’s fall:” and Lady Howard bowed her head, and a few tears gushed from her burning eyelids.

“You think so—you think Lady Alice is not aware that you are a divorced woman?”

Miss Agar chuckled with fiendish pleasure, knowing that she herself had informed her of the fact.

“Well, poor Lau! you do astonish me. So Lady Alice does not know that you were Lord Vernon’s wife!—How very extraordinary; but surely when she does, she will be more rational, and think twice before she rejects so great a *parti* as Colonel Leicester, and the man she loves too, for a mere form—a pretence; for you know she might very easily enter into that cross old lady’s vagaries, and do as she choose afterwards.”

“Miss Agar, you totally mistake Alice’s character. Indeed you cannot possibly understand it. When she *makes* a promise she will *keep* it; but she will never make any which can divide her from her mother.”

“So then I am to give an unqualified refusal to all Lady Margaret’s overtures of peace, and all her condescending propositions of consent to her son’s marriage with your daughter?”

“Miss Agar, I have never acted in any affair of moment without consulting Lord Howard, and I certainly shall not in the present instance; I will faithfully report your words respecting Alice, and he shall himself let you know his wishes. I am prepared to do exactly what he thinks proper.”

“This is very well, Lady Howard; but if I were you, I would take the reins into my own hands, and turn the corner of this affair before I put it in the power of any one to mar my child’s happiness. Remember, I am not defending that buckram Lady Margaret, but I advise you to accept her terms, and then afterwards you can follow your own feelings. You will rue the day, take my word for it, if you neglect this golden opportunity; it will never return again.”

“Miss Agar,” replied Lady Howard rising, “I have given you my reply—I have none other to give.”

“Humph! Well, poor Lau! you will repent it—you will bitterly repent it—I am half sorry now that I did not see Lady Alice; *she* might have thought otherwise on the subject.”

“Miss Agar, I conceive that it would have been an unpardonable act in you to have discoursed to Alice upon the matter, and I must positively forbid your doing so, till I have made Howard acquainted with the affair; and now permit me to say that it is time we should part. I wish you a very good morning.”

“It is rather a peremptory way of turning me out of doors, but I forgive you, Lady Howard. The sight of me cannot be pleasant to you; and even though I come as a friend, you would rather I did not come at all. Poor Lau! poor human nature!

“Well, I shall do the best I can for you with Lady Margaret, I will endeavour to soften down this mode of receiving her ambassage; but considering her *vantage ground*, you have not acted wisely. Good morning, Lady Howard, I wish you well.”

Lady Howard curtseyed,—rang the bell,—the servant opened the door—“Call Miss Agar’s carriage.”

“Lady Howard, I walked here,” said the latter. “I love exercise—it is not disagreeable to *me* to walk through the streets;

but some people do not like it. Good bye, poor Lau!—remember I am your friend—good bye—compliments to Lord Howard and Lady Alice.”

CHAPTER XIII.

“She cried

There is, I *feel* there is, a world beside!

. We shall hear not then

Of hearts distress'd by good or evil men ;

But all will constant, tender, faithful be—

So had I been, and so had one with me :

But in this world the fondest and the best

Are the most tried, most troubled and distress.

This is the place for trial—*here* we prove,

And *there* enjoy the faithfulness of love.”

CRABBE.

WHEN Lord Howard came home, his miserable wife stood like a culprit before him, ready to receive her sentence ; for she well knew that the intelligence she had to give would draw down his severe animadversions. He hated Miss Agar, and would doubly hate her now that Lady Margaret Leicester had made her the channel of communication respecting Colonel Leicester's conduct to Lady Alice. In despite of Lady Howard's gentleness of manner, and the cautious wording with which she made known to him the purport of Miss Agar's visit, the storm of his displeasure burst as she expected it would.

“In the first place I shall turn away the servants that let that detestable old gossip into my house ; and when she did enforce her entrance what could make you such a fool as to listen to her—why did you not ring the bell and order your servant to turn her out?”

“I was so surprised ; I may say, so distressed, she came upon me so unexpectedly, and addressed me in such a manner, that I could not collect my thoughts ; and then her declaration of being come with a message from Lady Margaret Leicester, which nearly concerned our child's happiness—”

“Madam, you should not suffer your curiosity to entangle you in such a manner. You know how I hate that woman—that go-between—that meddler—that cursed intriguante—and you ought to have turned her, or yourself, out of the room, without an instant's delay : as it is, you had the pleasure of hearing yourself insulted, and your husband through you. A

pretty story, indeed ! to have one's honour in the keeping of *such a woman as you*, madam ; but I am well rewarded for my folly. Here my children are degraded, looked down upon, because they are *yours*. One has lost his life, I may say, for your sake—the other loses her happiness. Her fortunes are blighted—the man of her choice, and who would have chosen *her*, but for you, is separated from her—she is wretched—and I too am the husband of a divorced woman.”

He walked up and down the room in fury.

“Howard,” said his wife, with a firm, but melancholy composure of voice, which commanded respect even from him, “there is a degree of unreasonable cruelty which steels the heart against the endurance of such conduct. You charge me with a crime, of which you were the author, and in which you share, although the customs of society exonerate the man from all penalty in our case, and place it solely on the woman. But there is a tribunal in the breast of every upright judge, which metes out the degree of punishment, much more impartially : and there is a higher tribunal still, to whose mercy we must both equally supplicate for pardon, and before which no sophistication of argument, no custom or expediency, no pride of male pre-eminence and tyranny, will have the slightest claim to be heard in preference. My interview with Miss Agar was accidental—it was fully more painful to me than it could be to you ; and I cannot better prove my love for you, and our dearest Alice, than by repeating to you a proposition the most humbling one woman could receive from another ; and at the same time declaring my readiness to comply with Lady Margaret's terms of consent to the marriage of her son with our daughter.”

Lord Howard was silenced. He wished to have had some excuse for further ebullitions of anger ; but he had none—none against his wife at least, and all he could say, was,—

“Well, madam, that is not a bad oration. I suppose you practised public speaking : d—d provoking to have an educated wife ! No woman ought to learn to read or write. More harm comes of stuffing their weak brains with matters too high for them, than any advantage that ever was gained by it. By Heaven ! I'll fling every book out of the window. It is owing to her learning that that hateful stiff old Lady Margaret is such an impertinent haughty jade. She pretend, indeed, to lay down agreements, and plan out rules of conduct for Alice ; but neither her pragmatistical son, nor her prejudiced insolent self, shall have anything to say to any child of mine. And, hark'ee, madam, if you ever admit Colonel Leicester within my doors, or ever connive at Alice's meeting him, it

will be the worse for you, that's all," and he flung the door to with violence, and left the room.

No sooner had Lord Howard reached his apartment than he wrote a letter to Lady Margaret Leicester. He professed himself astonished, that she should have sent a third person (one whom he had every reason to dislike, to insult him by propositions which he deemed both unworthy of *her* to make, or of *himself* to listen to for a single moment. Colonel Leicester had already behaved in such a manner, that he had been under the necessity of declining his visits at Howard House, and compelled his daughter to declare to him that she would not be his wife ; and he begged, therefore, that for the future, he might never hear more of an affair in which he considered himself and his family cruelly aggrieved.

Miss Agar was sitting with Lady Margaret when this letter arrived. She had been declaring to her that nothing could exceed Lady Howard's violence, and her dislike to the connexion. That she had great influence with Lord Howard, and whatever sentiments of an opposite nature he might entertain, they would all be sacrificed to her vindictive spirit, which never forgave any one who had shown her a slight.

"Indeed, Lady Margaret, I consider it a fortunate circumstance, that the Howards should have received your overtures, your generous overtures, in this spirit—for theirs is an alliance which could do no honour to you, and might possibly have done the reverse. Now your son will see the propriety of conquering a passion which was never returned as it ought to have been ; and while you have done everything, made every sacrifice, to the furtherance of his wishes, the family of Howards have so insulted you and himself, that he will no longer desire a union, which he must feel to be, under all circumstances, so derogatory to his own happiness and dignity, as well as to yours. For my part, I am only sorry you ever condescended to court them as you have done."

"*Condescended*, my dear Miss Agar," rejoined Lady Margaret, her face reddening with anger. "Yes, I think, I *have* condescended—and if Leicester is not satisfied *now*, I must suppose that he is wholly careless of my affection. But here is a letter from Lord Howard," looking at one which was brought in.

She took out her scissors, put on her spectacles, cut the paper carefully round the seal, and read the letter aloud.

"There's for you, my Lady Margaret," said Miss Agar, who had read the letter over her shoulder, putting her hands on her hips—"there is the confirmation of what I have been

telling you—you see what *they* are : I am sure I suffered enough with *her* in her young days.”

“ Ay, there indeed,” rejoined Lady Margaret ; “ I think this letter finishes the business. I have only to show it to Leicester, and he will be aware what his mother is, and what those people *are* who have been endeavouring to wean his affections from me.”

Miss Agar’s malice was now fully gratified. She was revenged on Lady Howard—she had broken off the marriage on which Lady Alice had set her heart, and she had managed the affair so adroitly, that it seemed to be the act and deed of Lord and Lady Howard rather than her own.

When Colonel Leicester was informed of the contents of Lord Howard’s letter, he felt that all hope was over for him ! What, after his mother had waived every prejudice, and smoothed every obstacle by an unqualified consent—the Howards haughtily repelled his suit, cast him off, forbade him their house ; and Alice did not put in one word of regret, or express the least kindness towards him, but preserved the same indignant feeling which she had felt when on a former occasion she refused his offer, under limitations.

He honoured her for that very refusal, and ceased not to reproach himself for having so made it ; but now that Lady Margaret declared she would take her to her heart as if she were her own child, and for her sake receive Lady Howard, he felt certain that Alice had never loved him—did not love him, since she rejected his suit : but then again a thousand tender reminiscences, trifling in themselves, but conclusive from presumptive evidence, came to his recollection, and rather embittered than soothed his present disappointment ; for how reconcile her behaviour at various times, except by thinking she was fickle and capricious ? Resting on this idea, he determined he would root out all remembrance of her—he would apply to business, pleasure—have recourse to those various sources of occupation which are open to men on such occasions, and seek, in higher pursuits of honourable ambition, to lose all thought of his late dream of domestic happiness : nor was he tardy in putting his resolve into execution. He thanked his mother warmly for having yielded to his wishes, and endeavoured to promote them, and told her he yet hoped to prove himself worthy of her affection.

An opportunity offered of accompanying a friend to Greece, and he left England about a week after the final close of his hopes.

Lady Alice had awaited from day to day, trusting that her

father's preference for Colonel Leicester would have induced him to recall the former to their society, after the last quarrel they had had, even as he had done once before; but day succeeded to day, and he came not—neither did she hear his name mentioned.

She observed that her mother's countenance was more sad than ever, and that the lines of care began to be fixed residents on her hitherto placid face. The loss of her brother was a grief which she felt that she could not herself ever entirely recover; and she knew that to her mother the blow had been so heavy, that she dreaded it was only the forerunner of a second calamity. But Lady Alice was now aware that there was yet another anguish, which was renewed, day by day, and was bowing down Lady Howard with additional weight every time she rallied from her former grief. This was her father's increasing ill-temper; and from the ungoverned fury with which he frequently reproached his wife, as well as the violence from which even his favourite Alice did not escape, she looked forward to some awful catastrophe.

Lord Howard even allowed himself now constantly to make insulting allusions to her mother before her, which was quite a new feature in his conduct; for hitherto, at least in the presence of a third person, he had been tenacious of upholding his wife; and it required all Lady Alice's watchfulness either to go out of the room, and so avoid hearing it, or by seeming not to be aware of his meaning, when she was obliged to remain. She had determined that she never would allow to mortal that she knew of her mother's guilt; and that no earthly power should ever induce her to betray, by word or look, that she was acquainted with her disgrace.

Hours passed into days, and days into weeks; and weeks to months: the sound of music or of mirth was never heard in Howard House. Lady Alice suffered in silence. She tried to smile, but it produced only a melancholy expression; she tried to converse on subjects which had been interesting to her father, but he always made some bitter remark, which led back to the source of his ill-temper, and then her mother looked terrified, and she relapsed into silence.

One only pleasure in her sad history remained for her—it was painting a portrait of Colonel Leicester. Whenever she thought her presence was not wanted, she retired to her chamber, busied herself with this occupation, and succeeded in making not only a *likeness*, but a picture. There was in her room an old-fashioned closet; and in this, as in a frame, she placed the portrait. From time to time she would open the doors that

concealed her treasure, and sit before it till tears blinded her.

One day she was called suddenly, and forgot to lock up the portrait: she ran hastily down stairs to her father, always in a tremor when summoned by *him*; and was somewhat relieved from a fear of unknown evil, when he said—

“Alice, read me those newspapers—I like to hear your voice.”

These were the first kind words he had addressed to her for a length of time. She looked timidly at him, and he held out his arms; she rushed into them, and embraced her father.

But all this agitation was too much for Lady Alice. She endeavoured to compose herself. She knew that Lord Howard could not bear what he called making a *scene*, and she succeeded in checking any outward show of emotion. She took up the newspaper, and read steadily on through long debates; and then turning to the news of the day, she came suddenly on the following paragraph:—

“We are sorry to hear that Colonel Leicester, son of Lady Margaret Leicester, in making an excursion from Athens into the mountainous districts, was attacked by banditti, and severely wounded.”

Lady Alice did not finish the paragraph, but she remained in the same attitude, and putting one hand to her breast, said:—“I am faint,” when a rush of blood flowed from her mouth.

Lord Howard started up; rang the bells with violence, opened the door; called loudly; returned to his daughter; and caught her in his arms. In a moment Lady Howard and all the servants were assembled—some ran for medical assistance—some screamed, and no one, save Lady Howard, had sufficient presence of mind to give her any relief. She immediately administered that which at the moment was necessary—that horrible medicine which undermines the life it is given to save, and the usual course was adopted which is ever followed on similar occasions.

Lord Howard was distracted—Lady Howard the image of despair—Lady Alice alone was calm and serene.

“My dearest mamma,” she said, “do not be alarmed, I shall recover; or if God wills it otherwise, you must think of poor papa, and forget those who are gone before you, or only remember them to think they are in heaven.”

“Do not speak so—do not, dearest, I cannot bear that; besides, you know you are forbid to speak at all.”

What avails it to dwell upon the sad slow stages of decay,—to watch the symptoms which so deceptively hold out an appearance of renovated health,—the delicate rose hue of the cheek,—the glistening diamond of the eye,—the light step, and

the occasional cheerfulness of the voice, which disguises the canker of consumption.

Lady Howard saw all—felt all—but this time she bowed low before the chastening rod; she prayed not for the life which contained her own:—her prayers were voiceless, speechless—*her* agony was *her* prayers.

It chanced one day, in looking for some book that Lady Alice wanted, she opened the press which concealed Colonel Leicester's portrait. Lady Howard started back—she remained some time in mute astonishment before this image of her daughter's lover; a thousand contradictory thoughts and feelings came and went in brightness and in darkness to her thoughts; they all resolved themselves into one idea. Lady Howard would go to Lady Margaret Leicester; she would implore her to save her daughter's life, on any terms however humiliating to herself. It was then love—concealed love—which was wearing away the existence of Alice; and if that love was answered, if she obtained the object of her devoted attachment, she might yet live—she would live—live to bless her! The hope was too dear to be abandoned, and she believed that it was not consumption which preyed upon her, but the disappointment of her heart's first young affections.

Persuaded of this for the moment, it seemed impossible, but that when she confided the whole truth to Lady Margaret, a mother's breast would soften to a mother's pleadings.

She went to Lady Margaret's house—she thought not of her own humiliation—she thought not of being spurned, perhaps from Lady Margaret's presence—she thought alone of saving her child's life.

When she arrived at the door, she sent up word by the servant, that a lady desired to be allowed a few minutes' conversation with her alone.

Lady Howard's equipage, her attendants, her own appearance, obtained from the servants that respect which is always paid by the lower orders to rank and wealth. The message was delivered—the doors were opened wide—Lady Howard, breathless and trembling, stood in the presence of Lady Margaret Leicester.

“To what am I to attribute the unaccountable circumstance of seeing Lady Howard under my roof?”

Lady Margaret rose as she spoke, and put her hand on the bell. She did not ask or even motion Lady Howard to sit down.

“To the desire of saving my daughter's life,” was her reply; and here Lady Howard rapidly unfolded her own history and

her daughter's; for the latter was so involved in hers, that half the beauty of Lady Alice's character would have been lost, had she not done so, and had she not particularly rested upon the circumstance of her being *now* aware that Lady Alice must have refused Colonel Leicester; only, because she conceived that Lady Margaret was averse to his marrying her. For she went on to say "I have had the most undoubted proof that her very life depends upon his love, and that she is dying literally of despair."

"Come Lady Margaret, and behold your son's picture, painted by her pencil;—then look upon her innocent countenance, and refuse to save her life if you can."

"This is most extraordinary; I am at a loss to understand you, Lady Howard. After *my* conduct in this affair, I cannot unravel the contradictory statements which seem to render your words—the words of a person who is distracted.

"Are you not aware, Lady Howard, that, touched by my son's entreaties, and rendered miserable by seeing his misery, I determined to forego every thing for his sake, and I commissioned one whom I believe to be your friend as well as mine, to request Lord Howard and yourself would accept of my tardy consent; and that, seeing our children were so deeply attached, we should mutually lay aside all our preconceived objections, and place no selfish obstacle in the way of their happiness?"

"Is it indeed possible, Lady Margaret, that you should have committed so kind a trust to so cruel a messenger? Hear me declare to you, that Miss Agar, so far from holding out any unconditional hope, came, as she said, for the express purpose of explaining the *only terms* upon which you would ever consent to Colonel Leicester's union with Alice; terms so humiliating to me, that few mothers, even those in my unhappy case, would have brought themselves to accede to them; but I determined, in my own mind, that no selfish feeling should interfere with my child's happiness. Nevertheless, it was to Lord Howard, and not to Miss Agar, that I was to make known this resolve; and I replied, that I would consult him on this point, as I had done on every other, and could give no answer till I had communicated the affair to him. Miss Agar told me I should repent not acting upon my own judgment, and left me.

"Lord Howard, already offended at Colonel Leicester's conduct in respect to our child, became more incensed when I repeated to him the purport of Miss Agar's visit, and he wrote the note which you must have received, Lady Margaret, and which broke off all further negotiations on the business. Alice has been evidently declining in health ever since, and some

weeks ago, while reading the newspaper, which contained an account of Colonel Leicester having been attacked by banditti, to her father, ruptured a blood-vessel, and we have despaired of her life ever since."

Lady Howard's voice failed; she seemed ready to faint.

Lady Margaret placed a chair for her; hitherto she had not asked her to sit down; and laying her hand gently on Lady Howard's arm, evinced by her countenance that she felt for her.

Lady Howard made an effort to resume speaking. "This day I opened a cabinet in my child's room, and beheld the portrait of your son. A sudden gleam of hope shone out upon me. I knew that Alice had a very tender preference for Colonel Leicester, but I never knew, till now, to what a degree her happiness is involved in her attachment. She would not have busied herself in secret with recalling his image to her mind; she could not have suddenly acquired skill in an art which I had no idea she possessed, and with which love alone could have inspired her. Convinced, therefore, that her happiness, nay, her very life, depends upon her union with Colonel Leicester, I come to supplicate your pity.—Yes, Lady Margaret, it is a mother that sues for a mother's pity."

"I am so astonished, Lady Howard,—I will add, so touched," and she wiped away a few tears, "that I am unprepared to answer you."

"Ah! Lady Margaret, this business admits of no delay. I am in breathless agony while you delay announcing the word that is to save or lose my daughter. I would kneel to you—implore you—if that could move you. Oh! come to her—look at her—promise her that you will recall your son—that you will give him to her. Even while I am speaking, the decree may have gone forth—your relenting may be too late."

"Remember, Lady Howard, I *did* relent before it came to this. Miss Agar was not a faithful interpreter of my sentiments. On her alone lies the blame and the consequences. But if you really think I yet may save Lady Alice Talbot, God forbid that I should not do as you wish. I will accompany you to Howard House."

"May He reward you, I cannot," and Lady Howard wept in silence:—But hope was in those tears.

As the carriage conveyed them rapidly to Howard House, they neither of them spoke.

Lady Margaret wondered at herself. "What!" she thought, "is it possible that I, Margaret Leicester, should be in the carriage of Lady Howard, a divorced woman, and going for the

express purpose of asking her daughter to marry my son? It was, she thought, an event which ought to form a new epoch in the history of morals, and of manners. But she had not much time to reflect upon this before she found herself in Lord Howard's house.

Lady Howard at once conducted her to the room which contained her son's portrait, and having thrown open the door which concealed it, left that image to confirm the tender impression which she had succeeded in making on the inaccessible heart of one who had fenced all natural feeling round, with the prejudices and *letter* rather than with the *spirit* of virtue.

Lady Howard then sought her husband,—related to him every thing that had occurred, and dwelt upon Lady Margaret's kindness,—her intention respecting their child,—and the infamous falsehood with which Miss Agar, for some unknown purpose, had perverted Lady Margaret's intentions.

Lord Howard was visibly affected. His wife's disinterested conduct,—her love for their child,—her readiness to humble herself, even to the very dust,—restored for the moment all his admiration of her character—all his affection for her as the object of his first and passionate attachment.

"Now we shall be happy, again," he said, with that self-presumption which a sanguine temperament is too prone to fall into. Now our Alice will recover. Now we shall see our children's children, and through them the attainder on our reputation, and the stain will be wiped off. We shall feel once more, that we are living in the world we ought to live in, and among the persons whose rank and station are our own."

"If it so pleases God," rejoined Lady Howard.

"By Heaven, madam, you are enough to kill any man with your buts and ifs always thrown in to damp the lustre of joy;" and he passed angrily from her presence, and sought Lady Leicester.

The latter, more inclined to show attention and respect to him than to his wife, listened very courteously to his explanations, and entered with more of warmth than was usual to her, into a defence of her own conduct in the business, and into that of Miss Agar's with great reprobation.

Lord Howard requested her permission to write to Miss Agar, and express his anger and astonishment at her behaviour.

"No, my dear lord; leave that to me if you please; she shall be made fully aware of her despicable and unaccountable deportment; but I wish to do this myself."

They now resumed what was to both a far more interesting part of their conversation, namely, the manner in which Lady

Alice should be made acquainted with the apparently sudden change which had taken place in Lady Margaret's views, and of the whole unravelment, in short, of the story.

Lady Margaret promised to write to recall her son, and Lord Howard was, also, on his part, to address Colonel Leicester.

Thus visions of happiness and of future prosperity for himself, and those dearer to him than himself, filled Lord Howard's mind, and he was again the gay and careless being he had ever been.

CHAPTER XIV.

“Lady, that in the prime of earliest youth,
Wisely hast shunn'd the broad way and the green,
And with those few art eminently seen,
That labour up the hill of heavenly truth,
The better part, with Mary, and with Ruth,
Chosen thou hast. And they that overween,
And at thy growing virtues fret their spleen,
No anger find in thee, but pity and ruth;
Thy care is fixed, and zealously attends
To fill thy odorous lamp with deeds of light,
And hope, that reaps not shame. Therefore, be sure,
Thou, when the Bridegroom, with his faithful friends,
Passes to bliss, at the mid hour of night,
Hast gained thy entrance, virgin, wife, and pure.”

MILTON.

WHEN Lady Howard with every care and delicacy of mind and manner, made known to her child the fortunate turn which had taken place in her favour, and the near accomplishment of her wishes, Lady Alice looked up meekly to Heaven, and putting her arms round her mother's neck, said—“Too late, dearest mamma!” Lady Howard understood what she meant, but she would not say she did so; and with superstitious awe which seizes the wisest persons sometimes, on similar occasions, she would not reply to her child's warning, lest she should confirm the sentence she had pronounced.

Colonel Leicester received all the letters which were addressed to him, and his mother had the happiness of knowing that her son blessed her from the recesses of his heart, and that in less than two months she might expect his arrival; but she neither blinded herself to Lady Alice's extreme danger,

nor allowed herself to believe that if she *did* die, it would be for disappointed love; nevertheless, she sincerely regretted not having sooner given her consent to the marriage, especially as the same result, namely, Lady Alice's death, might have taken place, and her son would not have had any latent feeling of anger to urge against her. In addition, therefore, to every better sentiment, she heartily prayed for Lady Alice's recovery, and was assiduous in her attendance in the chamber of sickness. The former felt that to have Colonel Leicester's mother near her, was a happiness which in itself repaid her for all she had suffered.

What can be dearer to an affectionate heart, after their own parent, than the parent of the object of their love!—How much does the fond and loving heart seek to strengthen the tie by identifying itself with those from whom they sprung, to whom they owe the being of their beloved! There is something radically wrong; something of the corrupt alloy of a factitious life, when this is otherwise. Self-interest, and the pollutions of society render such feelings null and void; much confusion in families accrues, and most assuredly those words of divine truth are written in indelible characters upon all such—"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Lady Margaret Leicester was forced to confess that every additional hour showed her more and more the worth of her whom she had slighted; and she honoured, as well as loved, the child of the divorced Lady Howard!!

Miss Agar had written an artful letter to Lady Margaret, endeavouring to exonerate herself from blame, by saying that she had merely sounded Lady Howard in order to find out whether Lady Alice really loved Colonel Leicester or not, and that she had intended to return the next day with the unqualified message of which she ought to have been the bearer; but that Lord Vernon's sudden departure for the country had prevented her doing so. Of course this artifice was easily discovered; and Lady Margaret banished her for ever from her society.

Meanwhile Lady Alice was fast declining. One day, after Lord Howard had been buoying himself up with a hope that he knew was fallacious, he said in his daughter's presence, "How well Alice is getting; did you ever see such an improvement?"

Neither Lady Margaret nor Lady Howard answered, and the object of this remark was evidently pained by the light tone in which he spoke. At length, after a pause, she said—

"My dearest papa, while there is life there is hope, but I

must not deceive you, neither would I have you deceive yourself. As long as I could I have kept silence, but now the time is come when I must express to you my belief that my hours are numbered."

Lord Howard started forward, caught his child's hand, and bent his head over it.

"Dearest papa! the longest life will appear as short as mine when it is about to close. It is not how long, but *how we* live, that signifies. Let me implore you to think only of *this*. Do not allow yourself to repine. When I am gone, remember dearest mamma; comfort and support her; and my second mamma, dear Lady Margaret, let me implore her to identify herself with my parents, and to feel that the tie which was to have united them on earth still exists, though one of the links is gone. I beseech you, dear objects of my tenderest love, be all united. Let not any dissensions arise among you. I forgive Miss Agar. I pray you all to do so likewise. Tell her so; and tell her a dying woman entreated her to think that there is an interest to be pursued for the life that is to come, as well as for that which now is. To Colonel Leicester I leave my earnest supplication to believe that Lady Margaret fulfilled a mother's tenderest duty to him in all respects; and on all occasions relative to himself and me, he was my first, my last, and only love. His image was ever present with me. I only transferred it to canvas, not that I might see him more distinctly, but in order to multiply his form to my eyes. Tell him I did wish to live to meet him once again on earth, but it is not to be, and, doubtless, it is best it should not. Tell him I am quite resigned."

This simple and solemn address was heard by those present in silence. All self-regrets were hushed before the parting words of Lady Alice. Soon after she dropped into a quiet slumber—when she awoke it was to pray. She signed to her father and mother to join her, as well as to Lady Margaret; they knelt around her bed, and her spirit had departed before they knew that she was dead: so calmly—so like the slumber of an innocent child, were the last moments of Lady Alice Talbot.

The first dreadful moment of such a loss is not the worst—it stuns the senses; and, strange as it may appear, after a few hours Lady Howard fell asleep, and did not awake till towards morning.

During this time Lord Howard sat opposite to Lady Leicester. Occasionally he glanced reproachfully at her: but Alice had entreated them all to forgive one another's wrongs. Alice had herself forgiven—Alice had bade them comfort one another in their sorrow, and Lord Howard did endeavour to repress the

angry feelings, which it was perhaps natural he should entertain towards Lady Leicester, whose prejudices and unbending principles had been the occasion of preventing his daughter's marriage till the consent came, when it was too late. He could not help regarding Lady Margaret, in a great measure, as the cause of his daughter's death.

Time alone could subdue this feeling in Lord Howard's breast; for though his child's parting injunction to every one dear to her was to eradicate all harsh sentiments, and be at peace one with another, it would have required to be under control of a very different principle from that by which he was governed, not to resent the misery he felt, and of which he conceived Lady Margaret to be the cause.

Both sat silently looking at each other; and while Lord Howard indulged this feeling towards her, it would be doing injustice to that by which she was actuated not to say, that she experienced the bitterest pangs of remorse at the fatal consequences of her relentless conduct towards the departed Alice, and at the wretchedness her inflexible ideas had cost her own offspring—at the bereavement which Lord and Lady Howard now endured, and at the last hope of the unfortunate mother being thus cut off in the very bloom and beauty of her innocent life; and as she reflected on the sorrow of which her conduct had been the occasion, to the being she loved most upon earth, her son—she could feel, and intensely too, for the sorrow of others;—she placed herself in idea in their circumstances, and she acknowledged that she had been too rigorous, too uncompromising.

Lady Howard awoke—started up in the bed: she glanced quickly round the darkened room, and said—"It is over, is it not, Howard? Alice is dead. Tell me, when was it, for I forget—my poor head aches so—it is so confused," and she pressed her hands against her temples.

Lord Howard approached her, and said, in a low, suffocated voice, "Yes, Laura, dear; we are childless—Alice is dead. Be calm, dearest—try to be calm, for my sake."

"In time, Howard, I shall be calm; but you must give me time first. Lady Margaret still there! she must be worn out; it is many hours since she tried to rest. Do ask her, Howard—entreat of her: she has yet a son to care for—her life is precious to him."

Lady Howard's heart was tender and forgiving; her nature was characterized by gentleness. Even the woman who had once been cruel to her child—even with the person who had dealt most harshly with herself, and put her to an open

shame—even to her she bore no resentment, and she felt *for her* at the moment when her own sorrows were sharpest.

Lady Margaret shook her head mournfully in dissent to her proposal of attempting to rest. She knew she could not rest; her heart was scorched by the burning of self-reproach.

Lord Howard continued to sit by the side of his wife—their hands were locked in each other's. He felt that Lady Howard grasped his arm convulsively.

“My sin is visited upon us, Howard,” she murmured—“I knew the punishment would come: sooner or later, it always comes. The love that made me forsake Vernon—the love that gave our innocent ones birth, was heinous in the eyes of God and man, and the phial of wrath is poured out upon us. I have endured much; but I have never endured such grief as this. My poor child! my dear Alice! is it possible you are dead? Why it seems as if it were only yesterday that you laid your head in my lap, and wept for the loss of your play-fellow's society. Your first sorrow, dear one, was caused by your mother: your blighted affections, your early death, are all the fruit of your mother's sin. It is well, it is right that I should lose you: but she forgave me; did she not, Howard? I half forget that last dreadful night, though I remember clearly many years back,” and she shuddered—“but our dear child forgave me, did she not, all the wrong I have been the means of doing her?”

“Yes, Laura, one sorrow has been spared you—your children have never blamed you—they never failed in their respectful love for us both—Alice never owned to the knowledge of our story. That she did know it, we can have no doubt; but she never confessed to such knowledge—never even betrayed that she knew the painful truth. Your prayer has been granted, my poor Laura: your child never did change in one shade of her love for you.”

A knock was heard at the door; Lord Howard went to inquire what it was. He was called out of the room, and Lady Margaret Leicester and Lady Howard were left alone together.

The former looked at Lady Howard with an expression of kindness and of sympathy; the more affecting, because it was rare in Lady Margaret.

Lady Howard's long hair had fallen from underneath her cap. Till that day its colour had been like the raven's wing.

Lady Margaret had often marvelled at its beauty and preservation, considering Lady Howard's age. She knew every woman of title's age; but *now* that part which grew on her

temples was as white as snow, and the rest of the long beautiful tresses were thickly interspersed with gray.

Lady Margaret gazed for some moments at the sufferer, who sat with her head leaning on her knees, hiding the day-light from her sight. Oh! how painful day-light is at first, after a heavy grief. Was it possible, thought Lady Margaret; could sorrow have turned her hair gray in one night, or had she been deceived hitherto, and had Lady Howard worn false hair? But no! with the scrutiny of little minds on little things, even under circumstances that might well have power to set aside all the puerilities of life, she ascertained that the beautiful growth of the hair on the temples was the gift of nature. It must then have been sorrow for her child's loss that had done the work in a few hours which years of humiliation and pain had not achieved.

Lady Margaret was touched. She felt compassion for a sorrow which had worked such a sudden change.

“Do try, dear Lady Howard, to sleep again: think how necessary you are to your husband—preserve your life for his sake. Can I do anything for you?”

Lady Howard turned towards her, and fixed her eyes vacantly on her countenance.

“Thank you, Lady Margaret, but I cannot rest any more. Mine was not sleep—it was temporary insensibility: but I am awake again to all the keenness of anguish;—nevertheless, I feel your kindness. Oh! if you had been as kind a short time ago. But forgive me; I know it was love for your own son—consideration for him—that made you forbid his marrying Alice. It was natural; but, Lady Margaret, by that very love which you bear your child, you may form some appreciation of my sorrow. It is a sorrow of aggravated kind; for I have the bitter conviction that I am the cause of my own wretchedness—that my sin has brought this merited punishment upon my offspring—that I am the dishonour of Howard House, as well as of the family of Vernon;—think of all this, and then you will pity me,—yes, Lady Margaret Leicester will pity *even me!*”

She did truly commiserate that unfortunate woman. She determined to remain her friend—to soothe, to comfort, to uphold her.

This was a *great* step in Lady Margaret's advance to Christian charity. She remained with the Howards till the last duties were paid to Lady Alice, and offered every consolation which it was in the nature of that unconsolable grief to administer or to receive.

Lord Howard, strange to say, appeared to lean more on Lady Margaret for support than he did on his heart-broken wife. He was flattered by the attentions of one so highly considered in the world's estimation. Lady Margaret Leicester was to have been his Alice's mother-in-law. Lady Margaret Leicester continued her friendship to him and Lady Howard after that tie was dissolved. Of all this Lady Howard thought not. One only feeling filled her breast—a sorrow, which she knew would end but with her existence, and that it might hasten her death was the only prayer she offered up to Heaven.

Lady Margaret received letters from her son—letters of rapture—letters of grateful affection. They named the day of his arrival at Calais. They harrowed up the hearts of the mourners. His mother determined to set off and meet him on the other side of the water, purposing to persuade him to remain some time on the Continent, for she dreaded for him his meeting with the Howards, and wished to spare him that pang, till his grief should have worn off its first sharpe dge. Colonel Leicester was himself delicate—she feared the consequences of too great excitement—she feared the very air of Howard House; at the same time she was aware that it would cost her some ingenuity to prevent his coming to them directly; and, therefore, she persuaded Lord Howard to write and say, that he feared the trial would be too much for Lady Howard to meet him so soon, and that it would be better to let a short time pass over before this renewal of their misfortunes should take place.

When Lady Margaret departed, it seemed to the Howards that the last link between them and their child was torn away. She, who had been the cause of their daughter's misery, had, in the latter days, become as it were necessary to them. They felt their utter loneliness when she was gone.

When Miss Agar heard of the sad event at Howard House, she was not so unnaturally malicious as not to feel some compunctious visitings, recollecting how she had first wounded and blighted Lady Alice's happiness, by telling her of her mother's disgrace, and her subsequent cruelty in turning a message of joy into one of wretchedness. Yes, she did feel a sting of self-reproach, but it was soon silenced by the recollection that Lady Alice's mother had taken Lord Vernon from her in the days of her youth, and she thought, "I am revenged." There are some minds to whom revenge is sweet. What a hell such persons must have within them!

Some chance visitors, who had forgotten the circumstances which attached to the Vernon family, mentioned Lady Alice's

death, and added, that she was one of the rare instances which might be cited as having died for love.

“Nonsense!” replied Miss Agar; “she died as all the Howards do of a pulmonary complaint.”

Lord Vernon looked at her with a very peculiar look. It was not lost upon her. She was silenced; but from that moment she felt it was high time she should look out for some other home. She was determined not to do so, however, till the last moment.

Six months had nearly elapsed since the last child of the Howards was carried to the tomb. During this time grief had run its course. Lady Howard had not wept much; but her heart had bled with that anguish, which finds no relief, no outlet for its concentrated woe. She walked through her house—she sat down on the various seats, where she remembered to have seen her daughter—she held the implements of her painting in her hands—she touched the canvass, on which was an unfinished sketch—she gazed at it with a sort of idolatrous love, and then pushed it from her, and said,

“How worthless now! What matters these remains of genius? Of what avail are they? Can they give me back my child? Ah! no; they only render my grief more poignant.”

Sometimes she thought she would burn every vestige of a remembrance, which only served to pierce her through with many sorrows; while, at others, she wished to save them from decay, and to transfer them to some less perishable material; but in the meanwhile she passed whole hours before these objects, which gave her back her child’s talents, and recalled her various charms of intellectual grace more forcibly than the words of any other person could do.

Sometimes Lord Howard came to seek his wife, when his own *désœuvrement* made him not know what to do with himself; and, instead of entering into her feelings, he would say some harsh reproachful word, and talk of women’s grief being as frivolous as themselves.

“What matters it to cherish a bit of senseless paper or canvas? to sit brooding over these valueless objects, which only serve to draw off your attention from the living object of your duty and your care; but you were always romantic, high-flown, useless.”

Lady Howard closed the portfolio she was hallowing with her touch, and rising in silence, she followed him out of the room, glad that he did not tear to pieces those precious relics, to her so dear.

Lady Howard now experienced how light was every trial she

had hitherto undergone, compared to her present bereavement; and she looked back with surprise to the time when she had murmured against the lot, which, after all, she had chosen for herself; and when she thought of its comparative happiness, to that of the present time—

“Ah!” she said (as many have said before her), “I was not sufficiently thankful for my blessings: their value is only known and appreciated by me now that I am bereft of them. *Then* I had my children, and *then* I repined—unworthy that I was of them.

Lady Howard's appointed trial was now indeed hard to bear; for Lord Howard, partly from violence of temper, partly from his own agonizing regrets, spent most of his time absent from her. He generally dined out, frequently left town on shooting or fishing parties, with men of his acquaintance, leaving his wretched wife alone, to bear her sorrows and remorse unshared—unpitied; for remorse was a constant inmate in her breast. She knew all she endured was merited; and, strange to say, she was half glad when her husband was so engaged—for though he did not take pleasure in the pursuits he followed, she knew his home was changed to him, and that it was the last place he wished to be in.

When it comes to *that*—when a woman feels that her husband is happier away from her than in her presence, and that for the very love of him she is compelled to wish him absent, what hope is there of returning happiness? Yes! when it is truly love for him and not indifference to his presence which induces the feeling, there *is* hope—at least there is a consciousness of deserving that he should return. But Alice, his child, the favourite of his heart, was no longer there to welcome her father when he came to his home; and the sorrowful face of his wife, with her fond but melancholy greeting, had no charm for him *now*—rather the reverse; and this was the end of that passionate love which he had once borne her—this was the close of his conduct towards the woman for whom he would once have sacrificed his life—for whom he did sacrifice all the interests of honourable distinction;—this was his conduct to the erring but nevertheless devoted partner of his existence—and such is the conduct of many of those who sacrifice virtue to passion. But nevertheless it was most cruel, and even the cold heartless world pronounced it to be so.

Lord Howard ceased to invite any one to his house, for he had nothing belonging to him now of whom he was proud. His young, his beautiful, his innocent Alice, no longer graced his board. The hope of his family, Lord Talbot, was no more.

His wife had no longer those personal attractions which excite admiration, and make the indifferent and the careless forget all else. Nobody would envy him the possession of his handsome wife *now*; there was nothing whatever to flatter his vanity. The sharer of his home had grown old, and sorrow had made her older even than years. She was nothing now but the divorced wife of another man. How worthless is such love as that which Lord Howard had bestowed on her, when she ministered to his pleasure and gratified his sight! For worthless is the love which tires by lengthening years—which lessens with the decay of youth and beauty—which can be extinguished by the changes which added years produce even on the fairest forms.

Such love as Lord Howard's was as worthless as it was sinful. Not all his wife's constancy—not all her unceasing zeal to please him, could ensure to her a continuance of that passion which was sinful in the eyes of God and man; and which never is blessed, let appearances disguise the fact as they may.

Often Lady Howard asked herself, "Can this be so?—Yes; I have sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind. Howard fails me!" and her spirit grew faint, and she wished to be no more.

As long as her daughter lived, she had never felt utterly bereaved; she had never felt what it is to look for fondness and to find it not. There was a being who bound her husband to her.

Miss Agar's words were true; she felt their force, when speaking of the loss of her son, trebly verified in that of her daughter.

"It loosens your hold over the father, but it is all deserved." *All*,—save the loss of Howard's affections, and she thought, "I shall not have the strength to endure much more; it will soon be over,—my heart must break!" How little do we know what we can bear. We *can* bear all that it is ordained for us to bear. Our strength is freshly renewed with every renewal of trial.

Twenty years back (twenty years which had passed to them with the briefness of a moment now that they were gone)—had any one told Lord Howard he would love his Laura less than he had done at that time—that he would live to be unkind to her—he would have spurned them from him; but it never occurred to him now, to think that such *was* the case.

One evening, in the month of November 18—, when he returned home to dress for a dinner party that was to be given at a tavern in the City, famous for its turtle, he looked into

the dining-room, where his wife was sitting alone. He came in, asked her if her head-ache was better, of which she had complained in the morning, and inquired if she would like to see a physician.

"No, dearest Howard, thank you. No physician can do me any good, but will you——" she hesitated as she looked in his face, and saw the habitual frown now impressed there, more deeply marked on his brow; that brow which had been so bland and radiant.

"Will you," she said, speaking kindly, "if it is not a very particular engagement that calls you from home,—will you remain with me this evening? It is your birth-day, and I should like very much to pass the remaining hours with you. I will not often ask you to bore yourself with me. But this night, Howard"—then seeing his displeased expression, she added, "Never mind, love, another time will do—go out and enjoy yourself."

"Thank you for the permission, Lady Howard: I am exceedingly obliged to you. I regret that having made an engagement of some standing, I cannot have the pleasure of staying with your ladyship. Some other evening, I trust I shall be so fortunate as to be disengaged when you do me the honour to invite me;" and he curled his lip satirically as he looked at his wife.

She made no reply by words, but she gave him a glance, which might have softened his heart, had he any left.

Lord Howard quitted her without one relenting word. While he was dressing, he observed a sprig of myrtle and a rose, one of those late roses peculiarly redolent of perfume and typical of true affection, which linger in their bloom and sweetness long after their natural season is past.

He took the flowers up, looked at them, and flung them aside. They had been his favourite flowers—those which he used to give his wife when he loved her. No one could have placed them in his waistcoat but herself.

He finished dressing, and was about to extinguish the lights, when the flowers again caught his eye. He took them up. There was no one present to witness the weakness. He would indulge the feeling that made him place them in his waistcoat. He would go into his wife's room—beg her pardon;—but why should he do so now? it would be time enough when he returned, and he left his home, and drove rapidly to the rendezvous of mirth and good cheer.

As soon as he left Howard House, his wife had searched for the flowers. They were taken—they had been accepted. That

trifling circumstance gave the unhappy one pleasure. When is the human heart quite closed to pleasurable feelings? Never till it ceases to beat.

She said, "Perhaps he will again be fond of me;" and with that firmness of affection which formed such a beautiful feature in her character, she forgot all his past unkindness, at least she forgave it, and that evening was passed less heavily than usual.

Lord Howard, meanwhile, was surrounded by the convivial party he had joined. He partook in the loud laughter of his associates. No one present seemed to enter with greater zest into the witticisms of the celebrated wit of the day,—the buffoon of the great *Dinnerman* of his time,—and he gave out sallies of *bons mots* which were loudly applauded. But all the while, he had never felt more oppressed by sorrow; never had he reproached himself so deeply for his unfeeling conduct towards his wife as on that evening, while mirth and revelry were around him; and her lonely image seemed to rise up before him.

To dissipate this gloom he had recourse to the factitious exhilaration of wine, and he quaffed it to excess.

When the conversation became general,—“Is it true,” asked one man, “that Mrs. ——— refused to run off with Lord——? I cannot believe it; for what a *parti* for her!”

“Yes, she did refuse him,” was the reply. “She had the good sense to resist his entreaties. Mrs. ——— is a very wise woman. In her present position she has all the advantages, and none of the disadvantages which she would have had if she became his wife. She has escaped the disgrace of being a *divorcée*. I am always surprised when a woman sacrifices her position by running off. It is so easy to manage the affair skillfully, and not to pay too high a price for it. It never answers to the unfortunate woman who shuts herself out from society for the sake of the man; but the game is not equal; he does not—cannot return the compliment, for he bears no particular blame, goes about as much as ever, for he soon wearies of having no society, and then, ashamed of his victim, of course he leaves her, to follow the bent of his own inclinations.”

“It is a terrible mistake that some people make, do you not think so, Howard?” added the speaker, turning towards, and addressing him.

Every one stared—looked at the man who made this extraordinary speech,—then at Lord Howard; but the man who had made this unlucky remark, remained quite unconscious of his offence.

Lady Howard's name had for so long a time ceased to be mentioned, that by most persons her existence even was nearly forgotten.

Lord Howard bit his lip, drew himself up, and left the table without saying a word.

"How could you ask him, of all men in the world?" said several of the party speaking at once, after he had quitted them. "How could you ask *him* such a question? Why, Laura Vernon is his wife. She was divorced, you know."

"Aye, very true," replied the person who had made the remark; "so she is. I totally forgot. I hope he will not take it amiss. I meant no offence."

"Luckily," rejoined another man, "he has drank so much wine, he is not likely to remember anything to-morrow morning."

When Lord Howard reached his home, the fumes of the wine, together with the supposed affront he had received, made him rave and rage like a mad person.

He sat down, wrote a challenge to the man who had asked him the question about the divorced woman; then threw it into the fire, saying, he would not make himself ridiculous by defending the woman who was his wife, but whose conduct could not admit of defence; then he cursed himself for having married her; then the thought of her affection, her devotedness to him, of the heartless manner in which he had treated her; then of his children whom he had lost.

The fumes of wine added delirium to these thoughts, and he summed up all by saying, "It is more than I can bear,—more than I will bear!" He snatched a pistol which hung always loaded in his apartment, and levelled it at his breast. His aim was sure, and in an instant he was in eternity.

The report of the pistol awoke Lady Howard. She rang violently for her maid, and enquired if she had not heard the discharge of fire-arms.

"No, my Lady," replied the sleepy chambermaid; "I heard nothing."

"But, indeed I did," rejoined Lady Howard, evidently alarmed.

"La, my Lady, your ladyship's alarming yourself for nothing; do not be so terrified."

"Go wake Thompson, and desire him to search the house."

"Why, if so be as your ladyship thinks there's danger of thieves, my Lady, I do not like to go down stairs alone;" and she, too, began to partake of her mistress's alarm.

"Is Lord Howard come home?" Lady Howard asked.

“How should I know, my Lady, as I sleep in the next room to your Ladyship. His Lordship, you know, seldom comes home till daylight, and generally lets himself in with his pass-key.

Lady Howard felt indignant at her maid's impertinent answer, but she made no reply, and determined to go herself to her husband's room.

When she reached his door, she knocked several times, but receiving no answer, she said, “Howard, pray open your door for a moment.—I beseech you, open it.”

She repeated her entreaty several times, but receiving no answer, she thought, “*He will not* hear me, or else he is so sound asleep, he will be angry if I wake him;” so she returned to her own apartment, sent her maid to bed, and tried to calm her fears, and seek rest herself.

In the morning, the maid looked distressed and terrified when she entered her mistress's room, but seemed unwilling to speak. At last she stammered out, “If you please my Lady, Mrs. Thompson wishes to—to speak to you.”

Lady Howard looked at her with astonishment, and exclaimed, “Gracious Heaven! what is the matter? Howard—Howard!”—and she screamed his name out so loudly, that it resounded through the hall and passages; but her screams, heart-rending as they were, had no power to awaken him upon whom she called, from his long—last sleep. She went to his door, it was fastened. Howard,—Howard! open—open your door!”

The butler laid his hand on her arm. “My Lady, do not, I beseech you,” and he attempted to lead her away: but she appealed to him, and said, “if you know any thing dreadful, tell it to me. I command you tell me all you know, for this suspense drives me mad.”

“It is my painful duty to tell you that my Lord has shot himself.”

Lady Howard said impetuously, “Let me in! let me in!—I will see him.”

“No, my Lady, it is impossible; I beseech you not to put yourself to this trial.”

She leaned for some moments against the door in silence. Her attendants perceived she had fainted, and conveyed her to another part of the house. She remained insensible for such a length of time, that they became alarmed, and sent for a physician. The means resorted to restored her to consciousness. It would have been merciful, perhaps, if she had never recovered it; for how awful was the catastrophe which summed up the complement of her woes!

CHAPTER XV.

“What is the worst of woes that wait on age?

What stamps the wrinkle deeper on the brow?

To view each loved one blotted from life's page,

And be alone on earth as I am now.

Before the Chastener humbly let me bow,

O'er hearts divided, and o'er hopes destroy'd

Roll on, vain days! full reckless may ye flow,

Since Time hath reft whate'er my soul enjoy'd,

And with the ills of old mine earlier years alloy'd.”

Childe Harold.

HOWEVER great sorrow may be,—however mourners may be bowed low, or rendered careless of all worldly considerations, there are always those who come forward upon such occasions to inquire into, and settle the circumstances of the deceased, and take cognizance of every particular of their temporal affairs. The business of this life goes on just the same, though the widow lies insensible upon her bed of despair, or the orphans lift their hands for bread, or the broken heart sits down in silence to die.

If death is in every shape the King of Terrors, still he comes in very different degrees of terror to claim the debt of Nature. To the Christian, death is despoiled of half of its gloom—to the believer, it is a transit from darkness to light. But how awful is such a close to existence as that of Lord Howard, when, with an uncleansed heart and prayerless lips, he rushed uncalled into the presence of his Creator! Were it not for mercy, the thought would be too terrible to think, and live.

Lord Howard left no relation, except the distant one whose penurious habits and strange character had made him to be considered with a sort of superstitious dread by the lower orders, and with contempt by those of his own station: nevertheless, he was the person summoned to be present at the opening of the will.

Mr. Grey, the agent of the deceased Lord Howard, arranged the peculiarly painful circumstances attendant upon his obsequies. The verdict brought in by the coroner's inquest was couched in those usual terms which give a colour of excuse for the crime of suicide,—he had shot himself in a fit of temporary derangement. Mr. Grey's next duty was to search Lord Howard's papers, in order to ascertain if he had

left a will or written document respecting the disposal of his worldly affairs; but after a most minute investigation, none whatever was found,—all, therefore, devolved to the heir.

On this being made known to Lady Howard, she said it was well, it did not signify, and relapsed into the same state of stupor in which she had been plunged after the dreadful event. From this insensibility she was aroused by the announcement made to her, by Mr. Grey, that she must leave Howard House immediately, such being the orders given him by his new client.

She put her hands to her head, as if to recollect what had befallen her; and then replied, that in four days she would leave her house.

Mr. Grey looked at her with commiseration. “I am afraid your ladyship is not aware that there is no provision whatever made for you on Lord Howard’s estate,—but of course you have other resources suitable to your rank and station.

Lady Howard made no answer: but the fact startled her; and she remembered that when she left her first husband, Lord Vernon, her uncle, under whose care and protection she had been brought up from early childhood (her parents having both died soon after her birth), was so incensed at her conduct, that he left her totally unprovided for, as far as he was concerned, declaring that his niece had forfeited all claims upon him,—and he had further said that no good would come of such conduct, but that the curse of heaven would rest upon her.

Lord and Lady Howard had at that time laughed at the old governor’s words (as they called General De Lacy), little believing that “the sunset of life gave him mystical lore;” but now Lady Howard thought she heard these words repeated in her ears in the same sonorous voice in which they had been addressed to her in his life-time, and now seemed to speak to her from the tomb.

Her senses were completely restored to her. She could understand the full weight of woe which had fallen upon her. She was a childless widow—without home or shelter, or means to procure either,—yet strange to say, she felt strong in bodily health. Nature demanded these necessary supplies, and she thought, “how shall I procure them?” One only resource offered itself to her. Her jewel-case—those ornaments given to her to decorate her person—were now to become the means of her subsistence. For the moment this thought was a relief to her. “Once placed,” she said to herself, “in any abode, however humble, I can then give scope to my sorrow;—all I have now to do upon earth is to weep.”

Lady Howard took an opportunity to steal out of the house unobserved by the domestics: the motive for doing so was to look for a lodging—and she did not like those who had waited upon her state to watch her poverty. These are feelings which cleave to us to the last.

When first she found herself in the open street alone, at night-fall, a strange feeling of desolation came over her. She fancied every passenger was looking at her—every rude man of the lower orders was about to insult her;—she pulled her deep widow's veil carefully over her face whenever she passed one of the gas-lights, and wondered at the careless joy of every 'prentice lad as he passed by, in his coloured apron, whistling and jumping along in mirth of heart;—then the rattling cab, and the tired horses of some hackney-coach dragging the jingling vehicle along—and the bold, lost women, lurking in the thievish corners of the streets—and those lit-up pandemoniums where wretchedness and vice are licensed to hold their court;—all these sights and sounds appalled the trembling Lady Howard, who, for the first time in her life, found herself exposed to them.

“I must not think,” she said, “I must act;” and looking up to a small bow-windowed house, she read, by the light of the lamp immediately opposite, “lodgings to let.” She knocked timidly, unused to perform that office for herself. How little things sometimes rend the distressed in heart; and when they think the cup of grief is full, another drop is added to increase the bitterness. The door was opened by a respectable-looking person. Lady Howard asked to see the apartments.

“Oh, madam,” replied the woman, “we have only two small rooms to let. They will not do for such as you.”

“She knows me, then,” thought Lady Howard. “How unlucky!”

But she did not: only she saw the nameless air, and the peculiar tread, which designated Lady Howard to be not one of the common throng. Those only who, like her, have proved the wretchedness of actual poverty, *with an appearance of greatness attached to them*, of which they cannot divest themselves, even under rags,—those alone can know what it is to endure the sneer, and the contumely, with which they are goaded in their hour of penury and want.

Poor Lady Howard! she asked humbly to be allowed to look at the rooms, and was shown up the little narrow dark staircase, and the door was thrown open, whence there came out that mixture of a damp smell, with the remains of eating, which is so sickly and oppressive.

"And what do you ask for the lodging?" said Lady Howard, sinking upon one of the hard horse-hair chairs.

"That depends, ma'am, upon how long you may want them. If by the week three guineas—if by the month, two and a half a-week—if by the half-year, two a-week."

"The latter," said Lady Howard.

And then came the details about the house-maid and the cooking. How these realities disgust those who hear of them for the first time in their life.

Lady Howard, nevertheless, calmly concluded her bargain, gave the woman an earnest of a guinea, which made her drop a very respectful curtesy, and then she stole back again to Howard House. But when she entered the vestibule, the servants looked at her, she fancied, with curious and altered countenances. "But after all," she thought, "what matters? Is there anything now that is of consequence to me?" The obligation, however, to act for herself, had the effect of wearying her bodily frame; and for the first time since her last awful bereavement, she slept soundly, without uttering those restless screams which terrify the hearers, and of which those who utter them are frequently not even conscious.

The next day, Mr. Gray came to remind her ladyship, that on the morrow the heir was coming to take possession, and requested to know if her ladyship had decided upon any plan of life, or if he could be of any use to her. She thanked him; told him she had taken a lodging, that she should remove to it the next day, and that she should go alone.

Mr. Grey, though well-accustomed to such events, was touched by Lady Howard's misfortunes. He expressed himself kindly,—respectfully. The sympathy of any living creature is, at times, a refreshment to the wearied spirits. She went through the remaining scene of this part of her existence with a heroism of which she did not even know herself to be capable. She saw the remnants of her wardrobe placed in a hackney-coach, and she took up the jewel-box, her only means of subsistence; but she dared not go through the apartments of Howard House—she dared not lift her eyes as she passed down the great staircase. She fenced her heart with iron resolution—she felt it was compressed almost to suffocation, but she walked bravely on.

Mr. Grey handed her into the hackney-coach. The old porter, the last and only servant who had not been paid off, bade God bless her; and, as he put up the clinking iron step of the vehicle, she saw a tear upon his aged face,—then her strength failed her, and she wept. The coach drove on at a

rattling pace; the driver thought he was doing her honour, by going as fast as his horses could go, and she was very shortly set down in Orchard-street. Her luggage was lifted out, —she entered, and walking up the narrow staircase, sat down in her desolate abode!—The landlady came in to ask for the coachman's fare.

“He wants three shillings, ma'am, for bringing these two or three bits of boxes; but it is an imposition; two are as much as you ought to pay him.”

“Never mind,” said Lady Howard, taking out her purse; “pay him what he asks, and let me hear no more about it.”

The woman looked astonished—this was not what she was used to. These matters being settled, and Lady Howard having ordered a fire, was alone with her misery, and she hugged it to her heart, and hoped that she might be spared a protraction of her wretched existence. At first there was something to be done. There was a necessity of having food, and a roof over her head; but these matters once effected, all was completed, and her days passed on in such unvaried wretchedness, that she knew not the difference of one from another, the morning and the evening seemed to her as the same day, and months glided by which appeared like one long track of gloom.

But time was in its course effecting the various changes of its appointed mission. Lord Vernon died after a very short illness, and Miss Agar found herself once more completely upon the pavé. She had made sure of an establishment in his house, or at least expected that in his will she should find an ample provision; but what was her astonishment and anger, when she learned that her cousin Lord Vernon had not left her a sixpence, nor even made mention of her. Such ingratitude! after all she had done for him! and she rang a peal of complaints in all the neighbours' ears, dwelling upon her wrongs with infinite self-love; and not obtaining any sympathy, but on the contrary, every one of the persons to whom she addressed these ridiculous murmurs, when her back was turned, said:—

“What a tiresome, unreasonable, old woman; the neighbourhood will be well quit of her. It was really surprising to see such a man as Lord Vernon harbouring that ill-tempered mischievous creature.”

Miss Agar had now to seek out some other victim on whom to fasten herself; but she knew that this must be done, as though she were conferring, not seeking a favour. She must be rich and independent in the eyes of the world to obtain its good graces. The name of poverty is the gorgon's head from which

instinctively the very children flee; nothing is so foolish as to complain of being poor. Miss Agar knew that well; and though she *was* poor, she had always continued to appear rich, by living upon others, not as receiving charity from them, but as a condescension on her part to serve them. Hitherto this game had been successful, but now she scarcely knew where to play it.

The present Lord Vernon was married to Fanny Harcourt, and she was no favourite with either; she could not hope for a place in *their* establishment; besides, she always preferred a single gentleman's protection. She turned over her note book, in which during her whole life she had kept memorandums of who, and what, might be serviceable, come a rainy day, as she called it; and in doing so, she lit upon the name of Mr. Willoughby, her partner at all the Dowagers' card parties for the last twenty years. He, into whose pocket, as she herself declared, she had put many a guinea, by her dexterity at play.

"That will do," she said, "I believe he is pretty much *pauvre diable*, and the remnants of my stock, which I will take care to magnify, may prove a bait of sufficient temptation to catch him."

It was not very usual that this sort of compact should take place in this country, but Miss Agar contrived to make out a claim of cousinship, as she had previously done with Lord Vernon, and she hoped the *thing would take*, and that she should set the fashion.

Accordingly she proceeded in the late Lord Vernon's equipage for the last time, as she observed to herself;—"It was a pity, but it could not be helped: vain regrets were only for fools."

She took Mr. Willoughby by storm, made him acquainted with the purport of her visit, and proposed, in consideration of their relationship and of his deranged affairs, to make *bourse commune*, and dwell in the same house.

Mr. Willoughby burst into a fit of laughing, and said, "My dear Miss Agar, I am exceedingly obliged to you, and very much honoured by being your cousin *twice removed*; but think of the ill-natured world—and as to marriage, you know I am too old to be married."

"Married!" replied Miss Agar, reddening with anger, "I don't want to *marry* you, I can assure you. How vain men are!—No, no my good friend, you are, as you say, too old to be married;" (she knew that would pique him) "but the arrangement that I proposed to you has nothing to do with any-

thing of the kind. Can we not put our monied interests together in life as we have often done at the card-table, and you *know with what success*? Can we not be a *pis-aller* to one another when the town is empty? And when we can do better and more agreeable things, can we not both go our separate ways?"

"No, no,—Love, you know,

‘At sight of human ties,

Spreads his light wings and in a moment flies.’”

"I remember reading that when I was in love; but our ties would be much surer—those of self-interest. I could give you wealth; you could give me your consideration and *agrément* in the world."

"I am extremely flattered—flattered beyond the power of expression," taking her hands and kissing them; "but you would find me a terrible bore, and on the whole, I think we had better remain friends under separate roofs."

"Humph! Well, Mr. Willoughby, when you are confined to your arm-chair, and your gouty feet swathed in flannel, perhaps you will wish you had me to repeat news, and refresh you with a little lively conversation; but it will be too late, then; *now or never*, is my motto; good day to you!"

"Allow me, Miss Agar, to hand you to your carriage, and believe me one of your most devoted slaves."

She shook her head, pointed to his foot, which *was* rather painful, and laughed as she saw him limp back again into the house.

Miss Agar's plans were quickly settled. She went to Brighton for her health, as she said, after the loss of her dear Lord Vernon, whom she should never cease to regret, though he had behaved so ungratefully to her; and there, in a boarding-house, Miss Agar took up her abode, always hoping that her note-book might direct her to some useful hint,—and passing her life upon the watch to obtain something better; playing for sixpences instead of guineas; dealing in the lower scandal of the gentry instead of that of the noblesse; and happy to get a dinner where she could.

There are many such,—many who wear away existence in the same profitless, worthless manner, and drop into the grave unblessed by a single blessing—unhonoured, and unloved.

Lady Howard had, during the last portion of her existence, exhausted the resources of her jewel box. From time to time she had placed some token of past love in that wretched, yet

sometimes blessed, receptacle of the miserable, a pawnbroker's, till all was gone, and she owed the last month of her lodging. She had eaten her last crust; she had *no clothes* but the rags on her back. This is the romance of real life, a thousand times more touching than all that fiction can devise.

In mute hopelessness she opened her jewel box,—she lifted up tray after tray,—in vain;—for not one of the precious gems, with which it had been filled, was left. Not *one* of the gems, with which Lord Howard had taken such pride and pleasure in decking out the beautiful form of his wife, remained to procure her bread, in the hour of destitution; not one of the tokens of that love, which had led to her undoing; not one of the gifts from him, for whose sake she now endured actual want, was left. It seemed as though it was her punishment to be bereft of every thing connected with the man, for whom she had been guilty.

What an indescribable anguish it is, which is caused by the utter devastation of every minor object which linked the memory of those we loved with our existence! But she recurred with greater fondness still to those records of memory, which never could be taken from her while her life remained. The remembrance of Lord Howard's passionate love for her—the remembrance of his once doating kindness—the remembrance of his admiration—still were hers; but all else was gone. His children those dearest pledges of affection, were taken hence—the house in which they had been born, and lived, had passed into a stranger's hands—the old servants, who had loved them from their birth, who had felt for their master's disgrace, they were now the servants of others: desolation had swept the race of the Howards off the face of the earth.

Life was utterly valueless to Lady Howard; but as long as it lasts, human nature is compelled to think of food, and sleep, and clothing, and shelter. It is surprising how the hard necessity of obtaining these, drives away all other feelings from the mind.

She now thought she would perform any labour, whether of head or hands, or both, of which she was capable; but who would employ her, an unknown? or, if known, known as a divorced woman! She would, she thought, try to sell some of the drawings which her husband had been so proud of, but she was not sure they would be bought. The shops are overstocked with such merchandise, and many a clever sketch lies in the shop-window for months, without obtaining a purchaser, till, at length, the disappointed artist takes it away, soiled, and rendered useless.

Then she thought she would teach music. She would give mechanical lessons to some mechanical pupil—she would teach the letter of that spiritual art with which she had charmed Lord Howard, that art which she had exercised with such a magical and soul-stirring effect upon her hearers! Those only who have practised music with such feelings, and such conformation of organs, as Lady Howard's, can know what it is to be a teacher, and, above all, of music.

Then she asked herself, "Have I a friend left?"—that question, which is so grievous to the guilty and the despised; and she thought of those who from compassion might have tendered her relief,—Lady Margaret and Colonel Leicester; but she had never written to them; they had never written to her, at least not that she knew of; but as she had changed her name, and was dead to the world, they might have done so, and she might not have heard of it.

All these thoughts came and went, but they brought her no actual relief. Again she took up her empty jewel box; she touched a secret spring, which she remembered lay concealed beneath all the trays; it opened, and she beheld a gem of great price: it had been given to her by Lord Vernon, and therefore had been forgotten. It had been given to her on the occasion of the birth of her first-born son. It was a sapphire ring, with the name and date of Lord Stuart's birth engraved on the gold that encircled the finger.

This ring was the only gift from her first husband which she had retained, and it had lain there forgotten rather than kept, and now it seemed to be a means left in her hands by Providence to aid her in her extremity. This thought brought penitence and remorse in its train, and reproached her silently for her desertion of the donor.

Lord Vernon had been the best and fondest of husbands; but Lord Vernon, as an injured and forsaken man, had been more, he had been a forgiving Christian. All these thoughts and feelings, however, faded before the one idea, that she had not wherewithal to live or maintain the life, which, though she loathed, she instinctively clung to.

"I should think this would bring me a large sum," she said, looking at the gem, "for it is very magnificent."

Evening was come; it was a brilliant sunset, colouring every object with the last blaze of the golden orb: the park was deserted by all the gay crowd which had a short time before thronged its drives and walks, and now gave place to the eager, up-turned gaze of the urchin, who watched his kite rise high in the air,—to the languid step of the pent-up artizan,—to the

sick, creeping along leaning on their faithful servant's arm,—to the infirm, wheeled in their prison-chair,—or those happier ones, linked arm in arm with their loved though humble partners, who come forth at that hour in the summer season, to enjoy the remains of the long fine day which has preceded the evening, but which has been to some of them a day of toil, or pain, or sickness,—or weary labour, or worse than labour,—of hopeless leisure.

Myriads of such individuals, upon whom poverty or suffering has set its mark, if not in a striking manner, in that nameless air of desultory if not defined wretchedness, which is impressed on so many in this great city, now filled the park. The distant rumble of carriages conveying the rich to their banquets, and the loud scream of the delighted boy, as the evening breeze carried his kite far above out of his sight, and the gay bark of some romp-loving dog after some romp-loving child, were the sounds which had succeeded to the galloping of horses, and the buzz of voices, and the slow rushing noise of the wheels of the equipages as they paraded to and fro. Such was the appearance of the scene when Lady Howard traversed the park on her way to the pawnbroker's, whither she was going to deposit Lord Vernon's gift.

One by one, as the several individuals above described passed by her, she bestowed on them that feeling of compassion which she had in her noon of prosperity never denied to the wretched; and which she now, by self-experience, felt still more keenly for others, while the few loved and loving couples caused her that darting pang of anguish which says, "Once *I* was like those."

At length she found herself in a different scene in the middle of Piccadilly. There was a great dinner that night at — House, and Lady Howard was obliged to wait before she could cross the pavement, whilst one carriage after another entered the court. Lady Howard held her veil tightly over her face, lest she should be recognised by any of the persons within them. Many of the equipages were known to her, as belonging to persons whom she had formerly known.

"Ah! if they did but recognise me," she thought, "even those careless persons would pity me." But Lady Howard scorned pity: it was what she most dreaded, especially from the world; and she hurried on as quickly as she could through the crowd assembled to look at the arrival of guests, and walked on without raising her head till she reached an alley leading out of the Strand, where the private entrance to the pawnbroker's shop was situated.

Lady Howard knocked, and on being recognized, was immediately admitted, and shown into a small room set apart for the reception of the higher order of persons who were in the habit of coming to that place.

It was now dark,—the shop-boy lighted the candles which stood on the mantel-piece—placed one of the black horse-hair chairs for Lady Howard, and then went to announce to his master that the lady in mourning was waiting for him.

As she looked around those walls in which she had lately often been, and every time with a heavier heart, she saw no appearance of those immense riches which are said to be hoarded in similar places. A shabby side-board, with a few glasses placed on it; a dirty mirror, with a black and gold frame, and golden balls depending from it, with pieces of spar, and shells on the chimney-piece; a table in the middle of the room, covered with a green cloth, and four chairs around the walls, constituted the furniture and decorations of one of the greatest pawn-brokers in London.

The only circumstance which conveyed any idea of its being a deposit for wealth, was the window being carefully screwed down, and double bars of iron placed across the shutters.

Lady Howard had often come there with a pang of such a nature as those alone know who have been bound on the same errand, as one by one she had parted with some gift that Lord Howard had bestowed upon her,—with some inanimate pledge of love, but not inanimate to her, from the associations which were attached to it. But this time she came with another feeling. True, it was a fine gem she was about to sacrifice; but what were gems to her? The means of procuring bread was all she thought of; besides, it was Lord Vernon's gift, not Lord Howard's, and she half reproached herself for the little value she placed on it.

But though the actions are to be commanded, the affections are not. It is in vain to say, love one person—do not love another; as well might we pretend to control the winds.

The pawnbroker entered, made a slight inclination of the head towards Lady Howard, which could not be called a mark of positive respect, but which escaped rudeness.

Lady Howard opened her bag, took out the ring, and presented it in silence.

Drawing down his spectacles to their place from his forehead, where they had been pushed up, he took the candle, placed the gem before the light, and examined the stone nar-

rowly. A few moments passed of great suspense to Lady Howard, lest he should refuse to give her money upon it.

At length he asked, "May I know, Madam, how this stone came into your possession?"

"If you will not advance me money, Mr. Jones, upon this ring, *without* my answering your question, I must do so; but it will be painful to me. On my word, it is lawfully mine. It came into my hands by no foul means," she reiterated earnestly, as the keen eye of the pawnbroker rested on her countenance in doubtful scrutiny, and with an expression of disbelief.

It might have been imagined that Lady Howard was used to scrutiny,—that she had become proof to all examination; but the lengthened gaze of the pawnbroker brought the colour into her pale cheeks, giving her face a transient glow of its former beauty.

"Madam, I can hardly doubt you; but this gem is of so high a value, it is a stone so well known for its price, that I must confess, I hesitate to give money upon it till I am informed how it came into your hands, lest others should have not acted fairly respecting it; and above all, lest, if traced as being deposited with me, I should be brought into trouble upon its account. This ring, Madam, belonged to the late Princess of——. It was a crown jewel. I knew it well. Her Royal Highness had no right to dispose of it; and if it was stolen from her, the persons who committed the theft, had they been discovered, or should they ever be so, will pay the forfeit of their crime; but every endeavour to trace them has hitherto proved unavailing. At the time of her Royal Highness's death, there was a considerable stir made about the business; but since then, the circumstance was hushed up, and is now, I dare say, forgotten. Still, Madam, I would not receive this ring into my keeping, or advance money upon it, unless I can be made acquainted with the manner in which it came into your possession, and also your real name, and that of the persons who gave it you."

"Is this the only condition on which you will serve me on this occasion? I have already said it will be very painful to me to tell you who I am, and in what manner the ring became mine."

This time Mr. Jones felt more convinced than ever of her honesty, and he replied in a gentler tone.

"I am sorry, Madam, to force you to disclose any circumstances of a private nature which it is unpleasant to you to speak of; but I am really anxious to oblige you; at the same time that I must consider my own interests, and my character,

which are at stake, and therefore I am compelled to abide by my terms, and to request the explanation I seek. I will promise secrecy respecting anything you tell me; it is merely that I may be able to answer, in the event of this ring's being ever found among my goods, from whose hands I received it, in which case *alone* it would be necessary that I should declare your name."

"I am in very great want of the money, Mr. Jones," said Lady Howard, "or I could not bring myself to disclose my name; but first tell me what is the highest sum you would advance on that jewel?"

Mr. Jones again examined the stone.

"Yes," he said, "it is *the* stone; undoubtedly it is; then laying his fore-finger on his lip, and considering for a moment in silence, he answered, "Of course, Madam, you must not expect the full value to be *lent* on it. If you do not esteem it highly, I should advise your selling this ring to some jeweller, I speak disinterestedly; he will give you a much larger amount than I can give you. One hundred pounds is the highest price at which you will be able to *pawn* it, and the utmost I would advance."

"One hundred pounds," thought Lady Howard, "would make me comfortable for a length of time. One hundred pounds to the houseless and destitute seems a large sum; to the great and rich, those who have never known penury, nothing."

Lady Howard replied, "Very well, Mr. Jones, I am willing to pawn it for that price; and to tell you"—(she hesitated)—What! humble herself before a stranger—tell her sin and her shame, and her poverty to the pawn-broker!—"Or starve,"—sounded in her ears—and as the scarlet blush covered her face, she said, quickly gasping for breath, "That ring was purchased by Lord Vernon,—the Marquis of Vernon,—more than twenty years ago, and he gave it to *me*;—is that sufficient, Sir?" she asked eagerly.

"Why, Madam, I should like to know your *own* name."

"I was Lord Vernon's wife at the time when he gave me that ring. You will find his son's, Lord Stuart's name, and the date of his birth, engraved on the gold of the ring. I am *now* the late Lord Howard's widow, and very poor:" and the blush forsook her countenance and she turned deadly pale, for she felt sick at heart.

The pawnbroker found the initials. "Yes," he said,—"*W. S. 18—*, and the Marquis's coronet above. It is sufficient, Madam," he replied. "I could, if necessary, refer to Lord

Vernon for the truth of the statement. I will fetch you the money, and have a ticket made out immediately."

Mr. Jones took one of the candles with him, and left Lady Howard alone.

"And is it come to this? Is the envied Laura Vernon,—the worshipped Lady Howard brought thus low? Oh, Howard—Howard!—how could you leave me thus!—Me on whom you once lavished so much love—me on whom you were so prodigal of riches!"

Lady Howard had writhed under the humiliation she was compelled to endure before a pawnbroker; but the severest pang—that which had wounded her to the heart's core, was the knowledge that Lord Howard had proved he cared not for her,—that he had, to use a common-place expression, but there is none which suits the meaning so well, grown tired of her,—that he had left her totally destitute. Yes, the man for whom she had forsaken her first husband had failed of being what she hoped he would have been, not only the lover of her youth and beauty, but the stay and the prop of her age. How had his passionate asseverations been fulfilled, of "though all the world should forsake you, yet would not I." But the bond between them was an unhallowed one,—it was rendered null and void.

Mr. Jones returned. Lady Howard received the money and the ticket, curtsied, and prepared to quit the house by the same entrance as that at which she had been admitted; but the pawnbroker, contrary to his usual custom, said, "This way, Madam, if you please—this way; that entrance is locked; it is past the hour of admittance the private way; have the goodness to pass through the shop."

Lady Howard obeyed, she knew the reason of it, and bowed meekly to the *order*. It was Saturday night, the shop was filled by several women of the lower order—some who had come to pledge their clothing, or other goods, to obtain bread for the morrow's Sabbath—others to redeem their decent garments, to wear on that sacred day.

How curious is the life of many! With how much pain and toil is it ordained for some portion of human beings to exist. A pawnbroker's shop is replete with melancholy. There some long-treasured token of love is deposited, perhaps never to be redeemed. There the drunkard sells his coat, to enable him to pass the Sunday in an alehouse; and there the thief secretes the stolen property.

Lady Howard hurried out of this painful scene. The streets of London, at that hour of night, present a pitiable view of the

idleness and depravity of many of its inhabitants; and as Lady Howard passed these wretched objects, seeking sin and shame, some of them yet young, and new to vice, others hardened to their degradation, she drew a comparison, involuntarily, between their sinfulness and her own, and thought, “what, though exempt from open degradation, yet how much more was I to blame, than those made prostitutes for bread,—I, who had an indulgent husband, a child, a happy splendid home, and yet forsook all, for my unhallowed love!”

Lady Howard returned to her desolate lodgings that night with money—she was relieved from the terrors of staring want. *For a time* she might be at rest—she had wherewithal to give her food and shelter; but was she one jot less miserable when she laid her head down to endeavour to find rest in sleep? Was her conscience lightened of its heavy burthen? Was her heart less sore? Was she less despised by herself or others? No. And still she was alone—alone in her misery. Oh that word—*alone*; those who have endured its full sense of woe—those only can understand its meaning.

CHAPTER XVI.

“My task is done—my song hath ceased—my theme
Has died into an echo; it is fit

The spell should break of this protracted dream.

The torch shall be extinguished which hath lit

My midnight lamp—and what is writ, is writ,—

Would it were worthier! but I am not now

That which I have been—and my visions flit

Less palpably before me—and the glow

Which in my spirit dwelt, is fluttering, faint and low.

Farewell! a word that must be, and hath been—

A sound which makes us linger; yet—farewell!

Ye! who have traced the pilgrim to the scene

Which is his last, if in your memories dwell

A thought which once was his, if on ye swell

A single recollection, not in vain

He moves his sandal shoon and scallop shell;

Farewell! with *him* alone may rest the pain,

If such there were—with *you* the moral of his strain.”

BYRON.

ONE afternoon, as Lady Howard was engaged in needlework, her mind entirely abstracted from the scene around, and brooding over images of the past, the landlady entered with a letter

for her, saying, the servant would return for an answer that evening.

The last months had passed in such a monotonous state of wretchedness, such a dead hopelessness and indifference to every thing in this life, that Lady Howard took the letter, and was going to cast it aside, when her eyes rested on the seal, bearing the Vernon arms. She started, and breaking it hastily, she scarcely knew why, read as follows :—

“ Will you allow your child to become known to you ? Will you grant him the happiness of endeavouring, in as far as he may do so, to console you for those who are gone ? I do not ask the *same* portion of your love, as was bestowed on those happy ones ; but I crave for that affection, which I have never forfeited by any deed of my own. Since the time that I discovered you were still in life, dearest mother, I have never ceased to long for some portion of your affection. I have prayed for you, I have felt for you. I was the friend of your Henry—*my brother*. Above all ; I plead to be heard as your own offspring, your first-born. You have none *now* but me. You will not refuse me the happiness of receiving my offering of love, although it is not that which you most valued. There is yet one other who entreats you to listen to my pleadings, she is not wholly unknown to you, as Fanny Harcourt, the playfellow and friend of your lost ones : she is become my wife, and, as such, she joins her entreaties to mine, that you will not withhold your affection from us. We will be all we can to you, dearest mother. Let us meet to part no more in this world. I would not force myself into your presence, unbidden. I could not endure a cold reception.

“ My dearest mother, believe that I am for ever your dutiful and affectionate son,—

VERNON.”

“ — square, Tuesday Evening.”

Lady Howard read this letter with the tears blinding her eyes, and yet a mixed feeling of inexplicable, unamiable, but *not* unnatural sentiment of a different nature, blended with the softer sentiments it inspired. Why was the one she did *not* love spared ? and those she did, taken away ? She murmured at the decree of Heaven.

“ Poor Vernon !” she exclaimed. “ Yes, you are *my* child. I feel a yearning toward you ; but love you as I loved *them*, never !—it is impossible ! Yet this kindness on your part is far more than I deserve, and it must not be cast aside as worthless. I will receive you—will love you as much as I *can* love anything ; and Fanny Harcourt, too,—*she loved Henry*.”—

Once, the first dreadful interview over—Lord and Lady Vernon visited their unhappy relative daily. They did not leave one kind office undone, not a mark of respectful affection was wanting on their parts towards Lady Howard.

Lord Vernon's first and last waking thought was of his parent. He remembered only, that his was now the privilege of ministering to her comfort—that it was his blessed calling to make her latter days, days of comparative pleasantness and peace. His wish had been granted—his mother became an inmate in his family. Nor was Fanny Vernon—the Fanny Harcourt of former days, less busied about and attentive to Lady Howard than her son. There are many ties which make us love others, besides the existing ones. There are things and circumstances gone by, which make us serve them with the servitude of the heart—and such was the case with Lady Vernon. Her mother-in-law was endeared to her, not only because she was her husband's mother, but because she was the mother of her play fellows, Alice and Henry Talbot.

At last, Lady Howard was grateful for her children's kindness. She thanked them and said, she had not deserved their affection.

It was evident to Lady Vernon, that Lady Howard had exhausted all the powerful feelings of her heart; that with Lord Howard and his children, she had buried all deep-rooted and ardent love; that her only wish now was to rest by them in the tomb.

In Lady Howard's youth, in the days even when she forsook the path of duty, and subsequently through all the years of humiliation and sorrow she had endured, religion had not altogether been a stranger to her. In her most trying hours, she had found refuge in prayer—she had sued for forgiveness—she had bowed down to the punishment of sin; but now it seemed as if that consolation was denied her. A melancholy hardness had crept over all her feelings, and she avoided making any mention of her sorrows. She never would allude to her children or allow any one to do so in her presence; she had succeeded in casing herself in adamant; she would sit for hours with her eyes fixed on the same page; then forgetting Lady Vernon's presence, she would clasp her hands suddenly together, and shake her head with that peculiar significance of inward grief which denote so much speechless misery;—at another, the low groan of a recollected moment of horror or of sorrow burst from her, and told more forcibly than words, of that anguish which has its own peculiar language.

And so her days went by. Thus they are passed by the

wretched and the dying. No posture was easy to her; every gleam of sunshine rendered the invalid (for such she was now become) too hot or too cold, The food which tempted the appetite yesterday, was distasteful to-day. The favourite exotic was placed before her; its sweet odour was now turned from, with disgust. Nothing could give pleasure or afford rest; and still Lady Howard seemed insensible to the only source of comfort; still she turned from the consolation of heavenly things; gradually her bodily strength forsook her, till at last she was confined to her bed. Yet no disease, properly so called, eat away her strength. It was the unseen hand that worked its sure slow work.

Lady Vernon tried to prepare her husband for his mother's death. She endeavoured to interpose a softening medium through which to view the decree of heaven, but he would not receive the warning; he could not endure to think that one so lately given, would be so abruptly snatched away. And he turned aside from his wife, displeased when she touched upon the subject.

The house to which Lord Vernon had removed his mother, at the time when he became acquainted with her miserable condition, was one of those villas which are so thickly studded on the banks of the Thames.

Beauchamp Villa was in the neighbourhood of Twickenham, that beautiful country, which is so fertile and so gentle in its sylvan scenery; that on a cursory glance, it seems an unfit residence for the sick and the dying. But there is a melancholy impressed in the interior of the outwardly gay looking villas, which tells of the sad scenes that have taken place within them.

One almost might fancy, in their apartments, that one heard the moan of the sufferer and the careful footfall of the attendant; neither is the view from their windows calculated to dissipate such imaginations.

The velvet lawn is sometimes decorated with a splendid cedar or a luxuriant willow leading down to the Thames. The myrtles and ilexes that grow in those mild sites to an unusual height in England, and remind those who have been in Italy of its never to be forgotten beauties,—all these beauties do not lessen the superstitious feeling of gloom which pervades those dwellings: but the persons who have sojourned in such a villa, witnessing the decay of those dear to them, will recognise the reflection of their own feelings at that time in this remark.

Lady Vernon now remained constantly with Lady Howard; she dreaded being a moment absent from her, lest she might

possibly pass suddenly away; above all, lest she might express a wish for prayer; but during the last week of her existence, Lady Howard was nearly insensible.

If ever intercessory prayers could avail, those of her son and Lady Vernon, it is hoped, may have done so; but the fountain of her soul was dried up.

Lady Howard prayed not for herself, but she thanked her son for his kindness, and with those grateful thanks she must have mingled prayer, for she must have thought of the hand that guided Lord Stuart to love her and to take her to his home. Shortly after she relapsed into stupor and never spoke again. Her earthly woes were ended.

"Fanny dearest, come away," said Lord Vernon, as his wife bent over her corpse, to ascertain if she were indeed gone.

"You have done all for my sake, all for her own; and he now became the comforter in his turn—much as he himself needed comfort."

"Not one word of prayer," murmured Lady Vernon, and she shuddered convulsively. It was a terrible thought to both; but justice and mercy are reconciled, and in that consideration, they found consolation.

One week after Lady Howard's decease, her remains were deposited in ——— churchyard among strangers' graves. Her son could not lay her beside the object of her unhallowed love; indeed, she had expressed no wish concerning the place of her interment.

It would have been a mockery to have laid her by his father; so she was buried in the land of strangers, far from all those with whom she lived or whom she had loved. What matters where our bodies are laid when the spirit is gone? True; yet who shall say that it is not gratifying to the survivors, to show all respect to the loved and lost.

Since the days of Abraham, mankind have honoured their dead in sepulture. Lady Howard's remains were not followed by a pompous funeral, but they were followed by a dutiful though a forsaken child; she was wept by him and by his wife. He remembered not that she had left him—he remembered not that she had other children whom she loved far better than himself—he mourned her loss with unqualified grief—his heart ached at the thought of all she had endured—and not one reference to the past—not one expression of reproach or blame ever came from his lips.

When some person in Hyde Park, leaning over the door of the carriage of the courted beauty of the day, announced, to

those within, "So Lady Howard is dead, Vernon's mother;" the persons who heard the news (as such intelligence is called) asked, "What! is she dead? She has resided with her son of late, has she not? Monstrous good-natured in him!"

"Yes, ever since that madman, her last husband, Howard, shot himself."

"How rapidly in succession all that family have gone off,—quite like Tom Thumb, one after the other. First, there was poor foolish Talbot, a maudlin sort of fellow, went moping about with a face as long as my arm, because, forsooth, his mother was divorced; and then that pretty creature Alice,—she was the next that died,—it was consumption carried *them* off. The father, you know, shot himself;—and last of all, Lady Howard."

"She was a beautiful woman," said an elderly man, who remembered her as Laura de Lacy.

"How can I get at the present man's the miser's vote for——shire, Willoughby? You, who know every thing, tell me that."

"I cannot," was the reply.

Mr. Willoughby remembered, at that moment, the drive in his cab seven years ago, in that same scene—the young man was dead,—he verging to age was left. Mr. Willoughby remembered Lord Talbot's anger, when he alluded to his mother's disgrace,—he remembered his admiration of Fanny Harcourt,—the same pantomime was before him;—now he himself was still one of the old beaux of the drive,—he still sat in judgment on the woman, and still led the same trivial life,—but Mr. Willoughby was not altogether a bad-hearted man, and he felt sorry at the moment, as he heard these idle, harsh remarks on the Howard family.

For a few moments—a very few, he was reflective. The gay, facetious Willoughby thought upon the vanity and the briefness of life; but the famous gastronome of his time, dissipated such unusual thoughts, by inviting him to dine with him that day.

Mr. Willoughby turned round with a vivacity of expression, and answered, "Yes," and looked forward to the hour of eight with eager expectation.

The Howards, and their unhappy history, was forgotten. Each went his way out of Hyde Park,—that scene where once Laura de Lacy had attracted every eye,—where the courted Lady Vernon had commanded attention,—where the divorced Lady Howard had drawn down remarks,—where the poor heart-broken widow hurried along on her way to the pawn-

broker's, and where now her death was thus unfeelingly announced.

It mattered not to the Howards what was said of them,—they were all dead,—every trace of their existence was done away. The miser had sold Howard House,—the roof under which they lived and suffered. He had shut up the greater part of Howard Castle, living only in two rooms.

Beauchamp Villa was, soon after Lady Howard's death, pulled down to make room for the erection of a brewhouse. The cedar, with one or two myrtles and ilexes, alone remain by which its site can be remembered.

Never were the words of Scripture more fearfully, more fully realized than in the complete uprooting of the Howard family. Well might those terrific words be applied to them, and to their dwelling, “The place thereof shall know it no more.”

When Lady Margaret and Colonel Leicester returned, to England, after many years of absence, *they* still remembered, *they* still mourned those whom the world had long since committed to oblivion.

Lady Margaret lived on to extreme old age—always pursued by remorse and sorrow, as she recalled Lady Alice's words to mind—“Too late; dearest mamma, too late:” and when it *was* too late, Lady Margaret regretted that unbending prejudice which had made her sacrifice her son's happiness, and that of the Howards: but still she laid the flattering unction to her soul that *she* had acted right, and that *Miss Agar* had been the instrument of evil.

Colonel Leicester, who never perhaps loved Lady Alice as she deserved, nevertheless appreciated her virtues, and lamented her fate with a discrimination of the first, and a deep sense of the latter, which precluded him from ever forming another attachment.

Thus were Lady Margaret's hopes of family honours cut off, and her old age was sterile and joyless.

Let it not be imagined that this history is a fiction, or an exaggerated description of the consequences which accrued from Lady Howard's crime. The events here recorded, cannot be entirely effaced from the remembrance of the present generation.

Lady Howard's history affords a fearful example to those

whose affections, like hers, are unhallowed,—to those who stand on the brink of the precipice. Oh! may all such take warning from this melancholy statement; but who ever profited by the experience of others?

How weak and inadequate our own strength is to uphold us in the path of duty,—how terrible are the consequences of the guilty joy of those who buy it at the price of virtue,—how sure the punishment even in this world,—how far short such attachments fall of giving the felicity which they promise; and that years of penitent humiliation, of sorrow and of trial, would be insufficient to atone for sin, was there not a higher power, willing and able to save even to the uttermost.

THE END.

TALES OF WOMAN'S TRIALS.

TO THE MARCHIONESS OF LANSDOWNE,

THIS VOLUME IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

THE WIFE OF TWO HUSBANDS.

The Trials of Marian Raymond.

"How high he mounts! Hark, Henry; we hear him still. Sure then I can fancy that bird like Hope, soaring—soaring—soaring up, and up, till he reaches Heaven—"

"Which he will never do;" responded Henry O'Donnel to his fair cousin. "Do you not see that hawk, tracing its pathway through the clouds, as the greyhound tracks the hare upon the earth?"

Marian shaded her deep blue eyes from the rays of the glorious sun. The song of the bird had ceased, as it changed its course, descending towards the meadows for the safety which the skies denied it.

"What a glorious chase!" observed the young sportsman, as he watched the issue.

"Fire, fire, dear Harry!" exclaimed Marian. "Ah! do now! the monster gains upon the bird; do fire."

"Nay, Marian, you know not what sport is," replied the youth, coolly and slowly raising his piece. "What a noble bird he is! 'Tis a pity to bring him down till the chase is ended."

"Fire, Harry, fire," interrupted Marian, "oh fire! There now, dear, dear Harry. Oh! the poor lark is struck. Fire, fire, if you love me!"

Quick as lightning the mandate of death sent the hawk tumbling through the air; and, almost at the same moment, the

little singing bird, wounded and struggling, fell on the grassy turf at the maiden's feet.

"Had you fired sooner the lark would have been saved!" she exclaimed, tenderly taking it in her hand. "Now—it will never sing again!—its nest, too, I know is in the furze. What will become of its poor mate!—Alas! my simile was indeed naught—how unlike Hope is this dying bird!"

Many tears flowed over Marian Raymond's blooming cheek as she watched the last agonies of the woodlark: Harry would have taken it from her, but she retained it to the last, and then raising a portion of the turf, placed it in its rest. The tears of youth are easily excited, and flow—without long gathering in their shining fountains. Their source, at the time of sorrow, seems inexhaustible;—yet they soon cease. April's sunshine and showers convey but little idea of the rapid succession of smiles and tears on a cheek that has only numbered sixteen summers. Marian, shaking back the raven curls that clustered over her white forehead, looked into her cousin's face, as cheerfully as if she had never known a moment's grief.

"When I go to England, and join my regiment, Marian," said Henry, as they proceeded homeward to Castle Raymond, "you will not, I hope, forget me,—years *must* pass ere I return—but you will still think of me, and be my little wife—will you not?"

Marian held down her beautiful head, and replied not.

"I wish you would promise never to love but me, and then I should go gladly to the wild wars, and return—a general and a hero."

"Return a hero, Harry, and I shall be satisfied."

"No, Marian—a general for your sake—a hero for my own."

"Selfish boy!—so you prefer the greater glory for yourself."

"Not so—but you must never be a poor man's wife! Young as I am, I know enough of human nature to see that you will be courted—admired—flattered—and all more for your beauty than your fortune; although you are a heiress."

A peculiar expression of scorn, amounting almost to bitterness, curled the maiden's lip, as she repeated—"Heiress!—Oh, yes—I shall doubtless be a heiress; but what, Harry, what shall I inherit! right noble blood—the cold-hearted cannot expel that from my veins; a spotless name—no act but mine own can tarnish that. What else?—Alas! Harry, the mouldering walls of yonder castle, which to my ancestors was indeed a tower of strength, is now but a fitting abode for the

wilder inhabitants of earth and air. My father, with that improvidence which you tell me characterises the Irish nation, has never retrenched a single expenditure, even since the Bal-lanamoyle estate was irrecoverably mortgaged—and at this moment I know that he is pressed by incumbrances on every side.”

“An English gentleman, if so circumstanced, would sell off a part to clear what remained.”

Marian shook her head.—“Dwelling so much among the English lately, Harry, has made you an alien to our feelings and our customs: here I stand, the last descendant of the house of Raymond; the hills of four counties that were ours are in sight; two bright and fertilizing rivers paid us tribute; and many hundred men followed us, when needed, in camp and field:—behold to what a handful our property, or, what is nominally our property, is reduced! the birch wood to the left—the ruins of Castle Cloyne, with its almost deserted village, to the right—the black bog, stretching in sluggish sloth along yonder hollow—and my own beloved mouldering castle, with its suffocated moat, its broken windows, its crumbling walls, and its ivy towers:—which, of all the objects I have mentioned, could my father part with?”

“Sir Charles Barnett’s agent is instructed to give any sum your father thought fit to demand for Castle Raymond.”

“And has the Sassenach!—” exclaimed the proud Irish girl, who, not ten minutes before, was weeping, as if her heart would break, over a stricken lark—“has he presumed thus to insult us? If the Englishman were but here, I would look him into dust, and—”

“Ashes,” interrupted her companion, with a want of tact, or rather feeling, which is pretty much the same in outward seeming, that paid no respect to her excited imagination. “My dear Marian, when I am a general, you shall come with me to England, where they value warm commodious houses more than old castles—and—but you are not angry with me again, sweet girl?—Surely you know I would not willingly cause you a moment’s pain; although I lament—lament most deeply, that your wild enthusiasm and uncalculating habits will lead—to much misery.”

“Thank you for your prophecy, Henry.”

“Dearest Marian,—I have named your only fault—and what a host of virtues do you possess to counterbalance that, which experience will soon eradicate, and leave you all perfection!”

“It is very strange,” replied Marian, after a pause, and with that delightful naïveté, which fades from the heart as the blush

from the cheek, with this sad difference, that, when once departed, the blush returns, the feeling—never; “it is very strange, that, while you see so many faults in me, I think you perfect—you are certainly much wiser—and I know that, when you go, I shall want a friend so much!—there’s my dear father—he is my friend, of course—yet he talks of nothing but Oliver Cromwell and the Battle of the Boyne—the bane and glory of our ancestors—and—I may say it to you, Harry, who know him so well—drinks so much, that he is no *heart*-friend for a girl like me.”

“Am I a *heart*-friend, Marian?”

“Be easy, do.—Then my poor nurse!—she tells such delightful fairy tales—but the worst of it is that the half of them are made up.”

“I should think they were.”

“Now, Harry, don’t tease me—I assure you, Nurse Grady’s mother saw—why, I declare, there goes Busca hot-foot after the grey cat!”

“And there goes Marian Raymond after both,” soliloquized Henry O’Donnel; “blessed, blessed girl—tenderness, love, pride, and gaiety of soul and spirit, free from every taint of evil, dwell together in that noble breast: would that I could call you all mine own—I wish you had not the reputation of wealth, for then, even now you might be a soldier’s bride—and, if so wedded, how quickly could I win a way to riches and to honour!”

The youth folded his arms over his gun across his breast, and leaned against a noble oak, which the lightning of by-gone years had despoiled of its topmost branches. It was a fine contrast—the tree magnificent in decay, scorning in its greatness the very power which had levelled its antlers to the green and humble plain; and the youth, whose dark eye drank in the rays of the setting sun, and whose erect and finely-proportioned figure told of prowess of no common order. Youth and age are, either in the natural or the moral world, the most interesting stages of existence; middle age is too worldly-minded—too busied with thought and occupation—too well able to take care of itself—to create the sympathy which is felt for the young and the very old: we look on the former with hope, on the latter with veneration; we pray for both, and feel equal interest in the sunrise and sunset of life.

Henry O’Donnel was rich in all things but the gifts of fortune; he had been brought up by Marian’s father as his own child, and the old gentleman had used his interest to get him educated and provided for in the only profession which, ac-

according to his theory, a gentleman could enter. Mr. Raymond was one of the few survivors of a race of Irish country-gentlemen now, I believe, extinct; I may add, of a race, which the much lauded and much talked of "march of intellect," would have crushed beneath its gigantic strides as a prelude to its utility, if it had not before that supernatural creation made its appearance, faded from the earth, and become a portion of the Emerald turf, that is, or rather *was*, the idol of every true-born Irishman. Mr. Raymond was tall and handsome, though his countenance expressed bravery, generosity, and good temper, rather than intellect or observation; his forehead was high, but not broad; and his eyes large and lustrous, but deficient in expression; he was, even in advanced life, a great adept in all sports connected with flood and field—kept a flight of hawks, and the best fox-hounds in the country—until literally obliged to part, before he mortgaged his best estate, with his splendid pack, from inability to support them. An English noble would have sent them to Tattersall's for sale; but Raymond scorned sales and salesmen—so he gave them away, and hunted no more: poor Marian used to say, he broke his heart when the plough broke up his dog-kennel; and I believe she was right—he certainly drank more claret after dinner than when he followed the hounds; and when his wine-merchant objected to his having any more pipes of that regal wine, because his bill had not been paid for more than eight years, Mr. Raymond chastised him severely for his insolence; and, to punish him more effectually, vowed a vow, which he religiously kept, never to drink anything in future but whiskey-punch. Of this most wicked beverage he certainly drank enough; and, as it invariably weakens the intellect, and excites a temporary madness when indulged in, the old gentleman, kind, considerate, and affectionate, in the morning, became proud, tyrannical, almost brutal, in the evening. No wonder poor Marian should regret her cousin's departure; the little acquaintance she had with books and accomplishments she owed to Henry O'Donnell. Henry invariably strung her harp, and corrected her drawings. Her companions were few, and unsuited to her taste and feelings; she was refined both by nature and habit—for her father, with all his peculiarities, had a just idea of female propriety. Mr. Raymond's politics were stern and unbending; offensive from their violence, even to his own party, and, of course, calculated to make him bitter enemies among those entertaining opposite opinions. Descended from a line of ancestors who had ever directed their minds to the arrangements of the national affairs, while their own were considered perfectly be-

neath their notice, the last of the name inherited the prejudices and habits of his progenitors without their wealth; and truly had Marian pointed out to her cousin the narrow boundaries of their once wide estates. Notwithstanding his habits, his eccentricities, and his increasing embarrassments, there were many who venerated and esteemed his good qualities. The Irish peasantry, with all their cunning and many faults, are, in heart and practice, the most generous people on the face of the earth—poverty with them is so sin.

“Shane,” exclaimed a poor woman to her husband, as the master of Castle Raymond, but indifferently mounted, passed up the hill of Cloyne, “run out, agra!—here, put on yer hat, Shane, that ye’ may have the satisfaction of pulling it off to a raal gintleman—and Shane, take the childer out wid ye—now mind yer bows and yer curtsies, ye pack o’ gaffers; always pay respect to dacent blood; its but little of it’s going these bad times, and more’s the pity. Thank God and the Vargin, we want nothing from his honour—but *it’s a great satisfaction to oneself to show proper respect to the gintry*, especially when they’re down in the world.” Mr. Raymond passed on, after exchanging salutations with the peasant, and praising his children. “His honour’s not like himself, some how,” continued the loquacious dame; “they say he can’t keep on the ould castle, and that the rain comes in through the roof,—and Nurse Grady tells nothing, barring a word now and then—she’s desperate ’cute—only I think by her that Miss Marian is over fond of her cousin, and her cousin of her; and if so, I dont’t see why they shouldn’t be married at onc’t—if they wait to get rich, they may wait long enough; *and, sure, two can battle the poverty better nor one.*” This is the Irish maxim, and *much* of Irish misery can be traced to its influence; the perfect heedlessness with which the poor unite hands and hearts has its origin in this pernicious belief. Our friend’s husband perfectly agreed in his wife’s opinion, although both were suffering from the effects of the evil principle; and he contented himself with adding, “It’s enough to make his honour look quare, to have that English Sir Charles Barnett coming here on a visit to his agent, with his dogs, and his horses, and his sarvents, like the Lord Mayor o’ Dublin, Nelly, kivered wid goold and silver, and his outriders, and all in the teeth of the counthrey—and he nothing but a bit of a banker—a pen-cutter, after all. Blessed Mary! if here an’t the whole gang of them coming up the hill, as sure as my name’s Shane Ryley.”

“And sure, yer not going to salute the likes o’ him,” exclaimed Nelly; “come in doors, do—here Paddy, Norry,

Looney, Katty, Kelly, every child o' ye, whether mine or not—come off the dunghill, every one o' ye, and in wid ye—sorra a bow or a scrape shall ye ever make to them that's beneath ye. There, Katty! if you want to see the fine coach, bad luck to it! pull the lock o' straw out of the ind windey, and ye'll have the sight and the dust together. The poor young lady's the most to be pitied; she's had no mother over her for many a long year—babbies dear, what would ye do without your mammy!" And the "*babbies*," fat, rosy, dirty brats, kissed their mother with more pure affection than the pink-lipped well-bred offspring of the great and wealthy deem it right to evince towards their courtly parents.

If Nelly Ryley did not possess philosophy, she was gifted with forethought; "the poor young lady" *was* the most to be pitied, because she had imbibed correct and just notions, that enabled her to see the error of her father's ways, without possessing the power either to alter or improve them. Her calm and beautiful mother, whose portrait smiled so placidly upon her from the cold and mouldering wall of their spacious and dreary reception-room, had taken all things tranquilly; she loved her husband, and believed that whatever he did was necessary to support his dignity. An English lady so situated, would have considered her life a life of trial; but Mrs. Raymond took it for granted that trades people who dunned, were very impertinent, and deserved punishment instead of pay; that it was not at all wrong for Mr. Raymond to drink claret to excess, because all gentlemen did the same; that it would be exceedingly mean to keep, much less investigate, accounts; and that the *entrée* at "The Castle," and four greys to draw her through the beautiful woods of her domain, formed the summit of human happiness. Her body was as fragile as her mind; she died one summer morning in consequence of taking a cold bath instead of a warm one, and her husband drank a double quantity of claret during the next three months, for sorrow that she had departed, leaving him a daughter and not a son. Many wondered he did not marry again, and it was reported that he had proposed in a very high quarter, and been refused:—be that as it may, from the day she entered her teens, Marian Raymond had been considered and treated as the mistress of Raymond Castle.

It was about two years after the stricken lark died upon her hand, that Marian was seated near a small table which supported her father's elbow; the evening sun had not set, and

its beams scattered a variety of tints over the antique room, whose furniture, time-worn and moth-eaten, showed harshly in the garish light; the shadows on the wall looked strange and uncouth, and the noble old greyhound, crouching at his master's feet, gazed with "lack lustre eye" up to the face of his young mistress. Poor Busca had long been blind, but the creature's fidelity was all the same; and if he had lost one sense in the service to which he was so ardently devoted, he gave to the other four work in proportion to make up for the deficiency. He was swift of foot as ever, his scent as keen, and his hearing as perfect, as when, in his younger days, he accompanied his friend Harry along the vales and over the mountains of Kerry. Marian sat near the table, on which were placed the ordinary appendages for the manufacture of punch, but they remained untouched, and the master of Raymond's head leaned upon his bosom; Marian's eyes were glazed within their sockets, from whence they looked straight out upon the landscape, without, it would seem, the power of noting herb, or tree, or flower; her hand and arms rested on her lap, and the paper she had been reading lay at her feet; her luxuriant hair burst from the slight blue riband that had confined its abundance, and fell in rich shadowy masses over her neck and shoulders—every feature told that she had received a sudden and fearful shock, and her cheek and lips were as white as monumental marble.

The father and daughter continued in this state of intense agony for nearly an hour, when the old oak door creaked upon its hinges, and Marian's nurse entered. In conformity with an Irish custom still venerated, she had remained in the house since her young lady's birth, the plague and amusement of the servants, and the humble companion, confidant, and adviser of her mistress,

"Och wirrasthrou! and is it thrue! Och, Miss Machree, is it the thruth intirely, that the young masther's gone from us—I can't belave the postman's news—and sure the whole kitchen's in a flood o'tears, and every thing in the house broken-hearted. Oh, tell me, Miss, honey, if indeed its on the paper that Master Harry's missing?"

Still Marian remained as before; and Mr. Raymond made no reply.

"Och, ma vourneen, you are Miss Marian! Ah! then, put the stare out of your beautiful eyes, and spake to your poor nurse—sure you're the only comfort I have now in the wide world—Masther, spake to her, she'll mind you," continued the affectionate creature, really alarmed at the rigidity and coldness

of the hand which she clasped to her bosom,—“Masther, Masther ! Miss Marian’s dying—Och, wisha, wisha, you poor stupid ould jintleman !” she added, in an under tone, “What will I do—Busca, Busca ! you baste, if you war not blind, you’d call her to herself, and lick her face, and howl ; for sure, its good rason you have, and y’er young master dead.” The poor animal, as if understanding her appeal, raised itself on its hind-legs, placed its fore-paws on Marian’s lap, and, turning its sightless eyes upwards, uttered a howl so piteous and so mournful, that Mr. Raymond started from his stupor, and half rose from his seat. The creature, when its wail was ended, first licked the hands of its mistress, and placing its face next hers, uttered a low moaning caressing noise, applying his cold nose to her cheek, with a tenderness which, of all the brute creation, dogs only possess. This succeeded in rousing her paralysed feelings—she folded her arms round the animal’s neck, and, bursting into a torrent of tears, exclaimed, “Your poor master, Busca !”

“Take away these things, Nurse Grady, and don’t let any one but yourself wait upon us this evening,” said Mr. Raymond, as the twilight deepened.

“But, Sir, honey, you haven’t so much as wet your lips with the punch !” replied the nurse in astonishment, seeming to think that if he did not take his punch he must be ill indeed. “Sure you’ll go to the bad intirely with the grief if you don’t take a drop now and agin.”

“I shall do that whether or no,” replied the old gentleman, faintly smiling—“No, nurse, I have much to say, much to do to-night, and it must be said one time or other.”

“The only drop o’ comfort for us all now is, that he may have been taken prisoner,” said Nurse Grady.

“He was too brave for that,” murmured Marian, in one of those low whispers that thrill to the very heart—“too—all too brave—I might have known it—and aften did I pray to the God of battles to protect—.” Her voice died away, and though her utterance was imperfect, still her cousin’s name mingled with the tears that came to the relief of her bursting heart.

“Let her talk—let her talk—it will do her good—it does good to man or woman, but especially to woman. Och, but her throuble is great, and no wonder. Oh, Sir, Sir, honey, to think he was reared for the slaughter !” said Nurse Grady.

The accounts were but too correct. No trace of Harry O’Donnell had been discovered after the fatal battle of Albuera, though a friend, a young ensign, who was by his side

during the engagement, had searched for his body in every direction; and though he distinctly recognized the spot where, in the act of encouraging his men, the gallant fellow had been cut down by a French sabre.

To poor Marian it was indeed a bitter trial; and though in after-life she encountered many, yet none struck her so forcibly as this: he was her first, her only affection—in childhood she had loved him as a brother, and time had knit their hearts with love; to him all her hopes were directed—he was the planet round which all her affections, all her thoughts, revolved. Her father had noted the growing attachment, but considered it as a mere juvenile feeling which a little time and experience would destroy. He had some prudential thoughts, as regarded his daughter's future establishment, and trusted to time and absence, and the Irishman's God—Chance—to wear it out. Harry O'Donnell, his step-sister's child, with nothing but his sword to win his way to glory, could neither retrieve the Raymond estates from jeopardy, nor add new honours to the name: he had therefore, made up his mind to regard and serve Harry as a nephew, never as a son; and was therefore greatly shocked at perceiving the effect produced on his daughter by the account of his death. Though he sorrowed much, he was perplexed and sorely tormented at the knowledge, which broke upon him for the first time, that Marian really loved her cousin—loved him with the deep and intense love which dies but with the heart. The master of Castle Raymond was but little skilled in human nature, or he would have known that it would have been far better to suffer Marian's feelings to calm down into something like resignation before he spoke to her of any future plans, and, above all, of the possibility of her forming another attachment; but he fancied that the present was the best, and, moreover, he had dispensed with his accustomed beverage, and was not willing to run the risk of keeping a cool head for two nights, when the sacrifice of *one* to the god of temperance might surely be deemed sufficient. Under any other circumstances he would have mourned more deeply for his nephew, though it must be confessed that the young man's English habits and independant ideas jarred much with the old gentleman's preconceived and hereditary notions:—a certain fearlessness of character having rendered poor Harry less careful of wounding his uncle's prejudices than was consistent with his own interests.

“Perhaps, my dear Marian,” commenced Mr. Raymond,—
“perhaps I had better not mention our affairs this evening, although they concern me so very nearly.”

"I will listen now, dearest father—now, or at any time, to aught that affects you. Busca—poor Busca—here, rest your head upon my lap—*his* hand will never caress you more!"

"Where is the spaniel—the pretty Blenheim, Sir Charles Barnett sent you, Marian? it is a fitter pet, I think, than that great hound."

Marian looked into her father's face, as if doubtful that she heard aright, and while her pale cheek crimsoned, made no reply, but by pressing her lips on the dog's head.

"My dear child, I have this day fathomed what I could not before understand; the cause of your coolness to Sir Charles Barnett—a gentleman—an *English* gentleman to be sure, but still a gentleman, and, I must say, a man of liberal feelings—a man of sound political views, too—never contradicted me in his life: poor dear Harry would always have an opinion of his own! But Sir Charles is a steady man, of good family, too, in its way, and old enough to take care of the main chance; rich as a Jew, and not purse-proud, wishing, as you know, our families to be united, which proves his respect for ancestry, and, I must confess, makes me respect him in return." He paused for a reply, but Marian offered no observation, her lips still rested upon the brow of the noble hound, and Mr. Raymond continued—"I suppose some girlish and boyish engagement passed between you and Harry?"

Another pause, and no reply.

"Then, I must say, I think it was very dishonourable of him—to——"

"Father!" interrupted Marian, springing on her feet in an instant, and clasping her hands with startling energy—"Father, name not him and dishonour in the same breath—purify your heart and lips from such a conception and such an utterance—Dishonour and Henry O'Donnell were never before blended. And you, too, who so well knew him, within these walls, in this very room, where so often he has corrected my faults, and directed my wandering thoughts to the right path—these walls to hear the blasphemy of that dear name——!" Then, as if thinking that to her father she had said too much, the poor girl threw herself at his feet, and bending her head to the earth, sobbed out a petition that he would retract his words, and forgive the agony which drove her to such extremes.

Mr. Raymond folded her to his bosom, greatly shocked at a violence which he had so little anticipated; and said every thing that occurred to him to convince her he meant nothing that could sully O'Donnell's reputation in the least.

"We will talk of this another time, my child," he said ten-

derly; "but it must be soon, very soon, Marian—very soon, or you will see your father within the county gaol, a prisoner—a prisoner, Marian, for paltry debts."

She pressed her hands to her forehead, and at last murmured—"Father! I understand you now—and now I cannot bear more—not to-night, but to-morrow, father—to-morrow, or the next day. God help me, and direct me for the best. Good night, dear father. You believe that he was incapable of a dishonourable thought, and you forgive my petulance. Now bless me, father—bless me, for I have need of blessing." She sank on her knees, and her unhappy and ruined parent pronounced as fervent a blessing as ever passed from human lips.

"Do not think of a gaol, father. What have I to live for now!"

As she passed from the apartment, the little spaniel, Sir Charles's present, met her at the door, and fawned upon her as was his custom, for all things loved her well; she spurned him from her, and the creature ran yelling through the hall; the sound smote upon her ear—"God forgive me!" she ejaculated; "Satan is busy at my heart." She crossed the vestibule; the rusty armour, and the disarranged fishing, and other sporting implements appeared dropping from the neglected walls; the splendid lamp, which had once shed its many-coloured light over the marble pavement, hung, broken and dangling, from the painted and cobwebbed ceiling; the spacious fire-place, round which a hundred followers had often crouched, exhibited rusty bars and broken fragments of stone; and as she passed it, the bright and glittering eyes of a starved rat that had been prowling for prey, glared upon her with their poisoning light: she shuddered with superstitious dread from the influence of the unclean animal, nor did she breathe freely until, standing on the green slope leading to the castle gardens, she fixed a long and piercing gaze upon the blue sky, studded with its starry worlds; there was *his* planet, glorious among the many, shining in its white raiment of brilliant light—fully and splendidly shining, not beneath a cloud, but standing out in the heavens, as if in triumph! Will poor Marian be accused of weak-mindedness if it is confessed that the brightness of the star communicated hope to her heart? She wandered among the tangled plantations, with her eyes still fixed upon the shining orb, until she found herself on the moor beyond the gardens. Her foot struck against a mound of earth, and when she looked down she found herself on the very spot where she had placed the dead lark beneath the turf. After that little incident, with girlish romance, she had planted two white rose-trees on the

tiny grave, to prove, as she laughingly assured her cousin, her theory to be correct; for that the spirit of the lark would mingle with the perfume of the roses, and teach them to mount the skies. Harry too smiled at, if not with, her. The rose-trees grew and flourished; and now, in the decline of summer, the grass was strewn with their white leaves; she stooped to see if one remained that she could gather; and when she raised her head, she saw that the white clouds which had been careering, like the sea-foam, through the heavens, had obscured the brightness of his natal star!—it was too much for her excited imagination, and she sunk upon the spot where, two years before, her hopeful emblem had met with an untimely end. Let no one make sport of youthful sorrow—it is the bitterest we are doomed to endure in our course through life; the trials of after age are, doubtless, more real, but not so intense—they are of the world, worldly—it is seldom they are unselfish—rarely untutored. Let any of us recall the devotedness of our first *real* grief, the anguish of our first *real* disappointment, and remember how literally it was deep and heartfelt—how perfectly mind and body were stricken during its continuance, and then, in justice to fast coming memories, we can never make sport of early sorrowings.

“And here, you are *a-lannan*, and your beautiful hair wet with the night dew—after myself, and the whole house seeking for ye, in every hole and corner, up and down, in and out. What brought ye here intirely? Och, my grief! Come in, *Astore ma chree*, and go into your comfortable bed, and don’t take on so, though great is your throuble; sure, my dear, we are born all of us, without asking our laves, and we die,—rich and poor, great and small, in the same way. Och, my bonny bird! it’s a grief to my heart that you war not brought up in the throe religion—for sure, a trifle of patters and avys would make ye so comfortable! The master thinks you asleep, and niver a wink on yer eye, no more than on the lady moon, who’s blessing us with her light. Maybe, after all, he’s not dead—who knows, but a little time will tell!”

A little time, and a long time passed, and told nothing—nothing was heard of Harry O’Donnell. His companions in arms had ceased to think of him—his uncle wished to forget that ever he existed—the old nurse even had taken the hue and character of the times, and spoke of him no more. Autumn with its golden sceptre tinged the woods with divers and magnificent colours—the swallows had deserted their haunts by the tranquil lake and the wooded hills—the song of the reaper, and the glad whistle of the blithesome blackbird, no longer

danced amid the valleys. Winter came, stealthily at first, sprinkling the earth with frosty diamonds, and nipping the young buds that ventured forth from their mystic inclosures—then, in his ice-car, he mounted the hurricane, and capped the mountains with his snows. Spring—lovely, all-healing Spring—with its young sunshine, and gentle showers, succeeded; the hill was green, the violets blue, the cowslips mingled their blossoms with the furze, the golden catkins hung from the birchin woods, over the blossoms of the timid and trembling anemone; the fly-a-way birds came back to their old habitations with unsoiled wings and unruffled plumage, as if they had never wandered,—

“The elm-tree blossom’d o’er the brooding bird,
And wild and wide the plover’s wail was heard.”

The seasons had changed; but in Marian Raymond there was no change, “neither shadow of turning”—Did I say, no change? I did her injustice; her beautiful head, which at first had been bowed to the earth, had risen into an erect and statue-like dignity, as she had said—“Here I and sorrow sit.” She had learned, from commune with her noble self, to meet, not sink beneath, her destiny; her cheek had settled into extreme paleness, and her eye gained in strength what it lost in brightness. The summer had seen her a wild, ardent, trembling girl; the succeeding spring found her a cold-mannered, dignified woman, whose lips were rarely known to smile, and in whose eyes no tears were ever *seen*; yet she loved Henry more deeply, and as tenderly as ever—in that one sentiment she was unchanged.

“And they all seemed to love him too,” she exclaimed, in the solitude of her dreary chamber; “I thought it was real, and that they would have laid down life for Harry—yet but one remembers him besides myself—his poor, poor dog!”

“Och, Mistress Grady! an’ I’m heart glad to see ye,” said Nelly Riley of Cloyne. “Sit down, Ma’am—and is it thrue that your Miss is to be married after all to that English barrow-knight, who’s ould enough to be her father, and has nothin’ in him but the spirit of a tame nigger?—he’d take a penny out of a blind man’s hat.”

“Indeed, then, Nelly Riley, I take it to be an ill pattrern of your manners to say the likes o’ that to one who’s coming into our family, and has good blood in his veins; sure, then, ye little know what he’d do for the sake of the young Mistress.”

“Maybe I do know, Mrs. Grady; don’t I know how (God look down upon her!) she’s been drooping all the winther;

don't I know how the brain faver came upon her, a laughing girl, and left her a sober, heart-struck woman; don't all the counthrey know how the poor Masther (more 's the pity) has been distressed; don't we know how the jaws of the law (*bad luck to it!*) has been stretched open for him! and don't we see that he's stuffing his daughter betwixt to stop its mouth? Sure, every gaffer in his whole townland knows that Sir Charles wanted to buy the estate long ago, and has money enough in the Limerick bank, and the Waterford bank, and the big bank in Dublin, to say nothing of his outlandish banks, to buy fifty estates like it; but he wanted the lady too, for he could get nothing in England like her, the ould, dressed-up, buckram-stiffened, face-painted dandy. You needn't grizzle, like a pea on a griddle, Mrs. Grady, it's the truth I'm tellin', and I don't care who hears it; but this I know, if the poor young gentleman hadn't been killed, she'd ha' seen Castle Raymond down the Shannon (and my blissing to her for that same) before she'd ha' sould herself to that English thingumby, what you call barrow-knight."

"You're a blaspheming ould woman, to talk that way of Castle Raymond; and you're a poor desaved craythur, too, for I can tell ye, that though Sir Charles is an Englishman, (which counthrey, you'll agree, is preferable before the world, afther Ireland,) he has a generous spirit of his own, when there's occasion for it."

"I see how it is, nurse, and why yer two good-looking shoulders stick out so grand, under yer beautiful Injee shawl; but I'd scorn to be bribed, poor as I am; and, remimber I tell ye, that though, grand she may be, rich she may be, yet ye'll niver see the smile on her lip so bright, or her step so dancing, as when she went wandering, like a blessed bird over these hills, with him whose grave was made without cross or prayer to mark it in the far counthrey."

"Nelly," replied Nurse Grady, "you're not a larned woman, so I can't blame ye; but you may take the word of one who knows better than yourself what belongs to the quality, and she tells ye, that Miss Marian will be as happy as the day is long—and why not? Won't she ha' got a rich husband; won't she ha' saved Castle Raymond from being sould; and sure, you know that if iver that came to pass, it would be the ould gentleman's death; won't she——"

"Don't bother us, axing yer pardon, nurse; haven't I got the sight o' my eyes, and the feelings o' my heart—and don't I see how it is?"

Nelly Riley was right; the torch of Marian Raymond's heart

was quenched. Sir Charles Barnett had been a leader of fashion, when fashion and vice were even more synonymous than in our own days. He had drank and gamed in royal company. He was still brilliant, and most elegant in his manners, but he was no longer supreme in matters of taste and ton; younger men were preferred by the new beauties, and Sir Charles sought retirement on his Irish estates, to recruit both health and purse. An old uncle died suddenly, and left him the reversion of immense wealth. He longed again to dazzle and to lead; but he felt and knew that, except as a dinner-giver, his reign was over:—a man may give dinners at any age; but it is not at any age that he can waltz, sing, and flirt with ladies who had succeeded their mammas in the empire of fashion. He had ever eschewed matrimony, for reasons which it is unnecessary to explain; but the radiant and dazzling beauty of Marian Raymond attracted his attention. He perceived, with the quickness of a man of the world, that she would immediately create a sensation; her *naïveté*, her wit, could have no rivals—her beauty, few. When first he saw her she had scarcely numbered fifteen summers, and then he introduced himself to Mr. Raymond by offering to purchase the castle and grounds. This was received as an insult by the proud, though needy proprietor, and it required all Sir Charles Barnett's tact to gain the good graces of the master of Raymond. He succeeded, as we have seen, effectually; for Mr. Raymond had only told his daughter the truth when he affirmed, that her accepting Sir Charles's hand was the only way to save him from a gaol. Poor girl! she saw that indeed her father's hour was come, as well as her own, and she agreed, only stipulating that she was not to be called upon to fulfil her contract until the following summer. Sir Charles certainly acted with great liberality, paid off all incumbrances, and was recognized as the heir to Castle Raymond after the present possessor's death. A maddening fever was the result of this self-sacrifice, and Sir Charles might have repented, (for with her characteristic nobility of soul she told him all the truth,) had he not consoled himself with the idea, that as her lover was dead, it was of no consequence: every one, he believed, must have a first love before a second, and its memory would pass from her mind as clouds from the summer sky.

“I am come, father—Marian Raymond is come to demand, for the *last time*, her father's blessing.”

Her father was alone in his chamber, but a joyous bridal party crowded the saloon.

“For the *last* time, my girl!—What do you mean?”

“After this morning there will be no Marian Raymond.”

“Ah! my dear, I wish you had been a boy—and yet I do not—but, though not Marian Raymond, you are my daughter still. Ah! well may he be proud of you——”

“I dressed, you see, father, for the sacrifice.”

“Sacrifice, do you call it?” he replied—“say rather, for the festival.”

“Be it so—there is some country, I think—though I cannot tell where, which *he* used to speak of, where they made the sacrifice a festival. But you will be happy, father—you will enjoy, long, long enjoy dear Castle Raymond.”

“So I will—that rascally wine-merchant, Marian, has been writing to me, to get back my custom; but not a drop of his claret shall ever enter my cellars—no, no; when you come again, you will hardly know the old place.”

“Father, grant me one request—the fishing-tackle, and Harry’s old fowling-piece—he hung them on the walls himself, where they now are—*do not let them be removed.*”

Mr. Raymond pressed his daughter’s hand in silence.

“When I return here, father, I hope I shall find you happy:—what I do is for you only.”

“Happy! how can I be otherwise, my Marian? I never felt better in my life—never in better health or spirits.”

He led her into the saloon; and soon after a gay cavalcade passed through the motley crowd to the village church—they entered its ivy-garnished portal—the ceremony commenced—proceeded—concluded. It was observed afterwards by many, that when the clergyman demanded—“Who gives this woman to be the wife of this man?” Mr. Raymond’s voice faltered, and his countenance, latterly much bloated, assumed a purple and inflamed appearance. When all was over, he moved as if to salute his daughter; but, instead of the warm kiss of parental affection on her cheek, she received the dying body of her father in her arms. A strong apoplectic fit had rendered the master of Raymond a corpse within twenty minutes after he entered the church of Cloyne. How truly were the words of Scripture fulfilled! “In the midst of life we are in death.”

And poor Marian—what would she not have given that the blow, if it was to be, had fallen a few minutes sooner. “Then then, I might have been preserved from this hateful union—what cared I for those estates—I might have lived and toiled at liberty, not driven, alas, to live with him whom I loathe!”

It is but justice to Sir Charles Barnett to confess, that, after this unfortunate occurrence, he did every thing he could to gratify the feelings of his bride. Though strongly disliking the Irish wakes and funerals, yet he permitted them to proceed, according to ancient custom, and took the lead in the procession as chief mourner. His conduct, towards Marian, on this occasion, commanded her esteem, if not her love; and deeply grateful was she for it. Youth is apt to attribute *all* vices where it discovers *one*, and to believe that those they dislike must inherit all the faults and imperfections they can possibly imagine. So it was with Marian; yet she endeavoured, with a resolution, not one of her least TRIALS, to make herself believe she had done her husband injustice.

“I will now,” she said, “labour to discharge my duty.”

When all was over, and they prepared to leave the country for the London season, Lady Barnett, on descending one morning from her dressing-room, found Sir Charles occupied in giving directions to various workmen as to the necessary repairs of the castle during their absence—the old armour and fishing-tackle had been torn rudely from the walls, and lay in heaps upon the marble pavement.

“Let these rubbishing things be given away, and the pictures and statues I shall send from London occupy their places.” One old gun, surmounted by a cap and fishing-rod, still remained untouched near the back entrance to the hall. “Shall I take these down too, your honour?” enquired one of the men.

“No, no,” replied Marian, who was leaning against the oaken ballustrades of the staircase—“No, no, Sir Charles does not wish those removed.”

“Not removed, my dear! you cannot, surely, mean these things to remain stuck up over the door! they would destroy the harmony of my entire arrangement. The hall is really fine; those columns and carvings in admirable keeping; and, when my plans are completed, it will be as imposing as any thing in England—you are not serious, Marian?—Peters, Lady Barnett has changed her opinion—remove those things.”

At this instant the remembrance of her noble cousin, as he had placed his implements of sport in their rest while she, with tearful eyes, stood at one side, and poor Busca, little dreaming that his dear master was about to depart, at the other came full upon her—she could not bear them to be removed—she could not support the idea of their being profaned by any touch; before Peters could execute his master’s orders, she called—“Forbear!” in a tone, it might be of emotion, it

might be of authority—it was, most likely, a mingling of both. “Sir Charles,” she added, going into the breakfast-room, “Sir Charles, I would speak with you.” He followed her into the apartment, and closed the door.

“It is a weakness, and one for which perhaps, I should beg you to forgive me; but I have never, since the commencement of our acquaintance, used the slightest concealment towards you.” Sir Charles bowed. “That cap, gun, and fishing-rod, were hung there by my cousin the night before he left us—for ever;—will you oblige me by not having them removed?”

There was a pause. How much of our destiny hangs upon a few words! Words—how brief, how mysterious, yet how powerful their influence! The instruments of our will, the directors of worlds, the arbiters of fate—and its controllers!—brief words!—that stamp an impress on the memory which time cannot efface. Oh, if words were but more accurately weighed, how much misery might be spared, how much evil prevented!

Marian waited for his reply—on it depended more than the narrow-minded baronet imagined—she waited long, so long, that it became necessary for one to speak.

“On the morning of my marriage, the last request I made my poor father was, that they should remain untouched.”

“You must,” replied Sir Charles, but too evidently mortified, “attach much value to the person who placed them there to object so strongly to their removal.”

“I did attach much value, and I regard his memory—he was my cousin.”

Sir Charles forgot (what I have observed many very elegant public characters forget, *at home*) his good breeding; and, with a perfectly well-bred sneer, interrupted her at the word—*cousin*.

“You need not attempt to conceal the fact from *me*, Lady Barnett; he was more dear to you than any cousin.”

“Sir Charles,” she replied, “I never did, nor ever will, conceal any thing from you. You are my husband; and, whether he deserves it or not, a husband has a right to his wife’s unqualified confidence: concealment I believe to be the root of all domestic misery. What my sentiments towards Henry O’Donnell were, you have heard, and from me, before; you cannot entertain any unpleasant feeling towards the clay—the mouldering clay—of my childhood’s friend. I promised him that those implements of the chase should never be removed except by his own hand; do then, I intreat of you, let them remain as long as I live—they are in the shadow—do not, pray do not, remove them, for—”

“For my sake,” she wished to have added, but she could not; she was unable to frame an appeal, bordering on affection, to one for whom she felt it not.

“I am very sorry, Marian,” he replied coldly, “but I regret to say, that trifling as it may seem, having given the order, I cannot see how I can retract; the things will be better out of sight. I had no idea that you entertained such a strong *penchant* for the gentleman; indeed, cherishing such a feeling, you ought to have paused before you honoured me with your hand.”

Marian’s only reply was a bitter groan; and, without another word, she left the apartment, crossed the hall, and proceeded with unmingled bitterness of spirit to the dressing-room she had recently quitted. She threw herself on her knees, and burying her face in her hands, gave way to a burst of regret, such as she seldom indulged in—for tears *are* an indulgence, and a blessed one, to the stricken at heart. Mingled with her tears were prayers—prayers to the Almighty, who is known to us in the hour of trouble, whether of mind or of body, as the One holy and true Spirit, who can either remove from us our afflictions, or teach us how to bear them as Christians only can.

Marian had known little, during her early years, of religion, except its name; but sorrow and solitude had taught her where she might find consolation; and enthusiasm, so strong a feature in her character, having latterly no wordly object to chain it to the earth, worked its way towards heaven.

“Teach me, O Lord!” she ejaculated, “to bear the reproach which I have in a measure merited; teach me to perform the hard and heavy duty of wife to him whom I love not, though thou knowest full well there is no other on earth whom I do love.”

She was interrupted by a whining noise, which she well recognized—it was poor Busca! Her four-footed friend was readily admitted; and she pondered in her mind whether she ought to caress even his dog, when he whom at the altar she had engaged to love, honour, and obey, would, she doubted not, disapprove of her so doing. The poor animal stretched upon the rug as usual, and contented himself by elevating an ear occasionally, as his beautiful mistress paced up and down the chamber. It was evident that Sir Charles Barnett’s mind, however dressed and fashioned by circumstances, was intrinsically poor and mean. Had he thought kindly, or even wisely, he would have seen at once, that though Marian was perhaps wrong, as a married woman, in cherishing the remembrance of one, all too dear in former times, yet the noble frankness

she had shown, the freedom from all art upon the subject, the confidence she reposed in him so bravely, deserved a similar return ; and had he been capable of valuing her as she merited he would have been proud to preserve what she had frankly confessed she valued. Were even the *wisdom* of generosity sufficiently estimated, the world would go on in better tune : people, for the most part, endeavour to bring events within their own narrow conceptions, instead of striving to expand in proportion to the greatness of events.

“I ax yer pardon, Miss—my Lady, I mane—dear, dear, it’s so hard to turn one’s tongue to a word one’s not used to ; but you have the heart’s respect, any way,” said the old gardener at Castle Raymond, the morning before Marian was to leave her childhood’s home—“and may I make bould to ax, if you intend taking Busca with you over seas ?”

“Yes, Frank.”

“Lave him with me, Miss, my Lady, and I’ll take care of the baste ; he has no taste for travelling now ; and sure Nelly Riley’s son, Bat, writes a fine hand, and ’ill indite a letter with the priest, (no disrespect to his riverence ;) and, if you didn’t think I’d be makin’ too free, sure I’d direct a line to tell you how Busca was, and how the rosies got on, and all about the mellonbed, and the new graft on the apple-trees.”

“I shall be happy to hear from you, thank you, Frank ; but I cannot part with Busca, he was my father’s favourite, and,—in short, I must take Busca.”

“Busca,” persisted the gardener, “is fond o’ me, and he and the gray cat are the best friends in the world now ; they lie together on my ould jock, that sarves ’em for a mat ; indeed, lady dear, I wish you would lave me Busca.”

“I am grieved I cannot oblige in this, Frank : is there any thing else I can do ? can I send you any thing from England ?”

“God bless you, my Lady, I should like a quarter of English tobaccy ; I’ve a great curiosity to see what sort o’ stuff it really is ; and I hear their kail, particularly their brocoli, bates Bannaher. But, Ma’am, my Lady darlint, for the love o’ the poor ould masther, and for the love—no, not that, because, in coorse, it’s past, but, for the regard of Masther Harry lave Busca to me—see how the craythur rams his could nose into my hand, as if he said, I’ll stay wid you.”

“It’s very strange you should have set your mind on this !”

“May be so, my Lady, strange things happen every day. Sure, it’s mighty strange what makes sich a beautiful, great,

big sunflower, as that yon, come out of a little blay, humpy seed, not as big, no nor half, nor quarter as big as a praytee's eyes! Well, plaze yer Ladyship, all I can say is, that if you don't lave Busca behind, he'll never see the ould gray cat again that's all!"

"Frank! I insist upon knowing what you mean."

"Ah, Busca, a cushla!" continued the gardener, with true Irish tact—"ah, thin Busca, would yer misthress not let on, I'd incense her into it, you poor brute, how yer no favourite with Misther Bijaw, my Lord's vally-de-sham, and how he said to me—'Ould blossom,' says he, 'if my lady intends bringing that ould stinking baste (axing yer pardon, Busca; but 'twas he said it, not me) with *us*, (by *us*, maneing Sir Charles and himself, the rude ill-raired pup,)—with *us*,' says he, 'we'll give him a dose,' says he, 'crossing the channel,' says he, 'and then make *our* (the impudent blackguard!) *our* lady believe he died of the say sickness.' So with that, says I, 'what would his honour say to that?' says I—'O nothing at all,' says he, 'for Sir Charles hates the sight o' him, and whenever my lady's back is turned gives him a poke or a puck with his foot—I have good raison to know that he'd never say a word, except "O be joyful," if he was fairly gone.' So I says nothing; for the might's the right evermore with thim English agin us. Now, Ma'am, my Lady, a' vourneen, you'll let Busca stay with his ould friend Frank."

Marian made no reply; her heart was too full to speak. She turned from the gardener to conceal her emotion, and at a break in the plantations encountered her husband.

"I have been giving some final directions as to the trees we wished put down this autumn," he observed, as they met—"Have you been directing your old gardener as to your flowers? by the way, he gets old, that Master Frank—I must send off some of my Scotch people from Barnett Park to get every thing in right order."

"Not to turn away Frank, Sir Charles?"

"Certainly not, my dear, if you wish to the contrary—always most happy to meet your views, where they are consistent with *propriety*."

Poor Marian made no observation on this sarcastic reply, but fancied that Sir Charles cast an unkind look on the hound, who, certainly, often provoked the baronet; for, in former times, Busca always received his advances with a certain exposure of the teeth and gums, not very flattering to one desirous of cultivating his acquaintance. Few words passed between them, until, on reaching the vestibule, Sir Charles

closed the door, so as to prevent the hound from entering.

“In England, Marian, dogs are not advanced to the rank of companions, particularly when they grow offensive by age.”

It was on Marian's lip to enquire if all things grew disagreeable as they grew old; but she remembered that grievous words stir up anger,” and held her peace. Sir Charles continued—

“I do not think that Busca will ever bear a sea voyage——”

“I think not,” was her forced reply to him, whom, under the influence of her strongly excited feelings, she regarded as little better than a premeditated murderer. That he should meditate the destruction of an animal he knew she so fondly loved, was cruel; but to take his valet, a low-bred, insulting foreigner into his confidence, and plan with him the death of that poor blind favourite, was mean, low, pitiful. How, in defiance of all her resolutions to the contrary, did she despise this man of worldly wealth and narrow soul! With this feeling came another—*he was her husband!*

Despite all that has been said to the contrary, there is something singularly brilliant and invigorating in “The Season in London.” The weather, from April to June, is, generally speaking, on its best behaviour; the animation spreading itself, either as a bane or a blessing, over all classes of society during the sitting of Parliament, is in full force: it gives gentlemen something to talk about in the park, in the streets, at the clubs; and excites (if any thing can excite an Englishman) something bordering on interesting conversation, during the ten or twenty minutes' pause before dinner, at which time the said gentlemen “bunch” together in whatever portion of the room fronts the largest looking-glass, or lounge on the softest sofas, to the exclusion of the ladies, and are thus enabled to criticize, quite at their ease, the merits of the last new speaker.—Despite, then, the *mauvais ton* of almost every man of “*ton*” you meet, still there is much to charm and bewilder the senses in the London SEASON. The parks teem with beauty and elegance. The opera, the finest and most glorious of sensual enjoyments, is in full force. The exhibitions, such as they are, are open, and there is always more than two or three subjects at each to repay you for the loss of time consequent on looking at all. There is bustle in the streets,—not the ill-bred city bustle that forces you off the pavement, and covers you with mud!—but the bustle consequent on the crowding of the better classes of society in search of amusement. The most noble horses parade

the squares ; carriages, unrivalled in beauty of design and execution, meet each other at every corner. There is a rich and gorgeous blaze of all that is bright and curious in the magazines and shops ; the best books are reserved by the wary publishers for "the season ;" the most exquisite exotics flourish in the conservatories of the great and gay ; and the air of the favoured "West End" is redolent of the purest perfumes. Any foreigner, passing casually through London during "the season" would pronounce us the wealthiest and happiest of nations, and imagine that distress had never set its seal of want, and sin, and death, upon any of the children of Britain. Those who seek truth must dive amid the turbulent and disordered waters of sorrow, as well as ramble through the smiling groves and laughing pastures of joy !

It was Marian's third season in brilliant London, and many thought it was never truly brilliant until she appeared. Both in Ireland, and on her husband's estates in England, she had been, as far as she was permitted, an angel of charity ; she had founded schools, clothed the naked, fed the hungry ; and the deep felt and grateful blessing followed the "pale lady" wherever she went. The first season passed off as her husband expected ; to use the cant phrase, she was splendidly successful. Though Barnett is an ugly and common sounding name, there were "Barnett hats ;" and the hair was "*Crêpé à la Barnette* ;" and Lady Barnett's *wit* was often quoted, as the wit *par excellence*. Those who called her witty, knew not what wit was. Wit may be likened to a silver arrow, pure, glittering, and pointed, hers was of a more severe quality :—it was satire ; not the flippant and ill-tempered smartness, descending to the person, not dealing with the vice,—but that finer and more ennobling quality, which feared not to tell Philip feasting that it would only commune with Philip fasting. Witty minds are seldom great, but a just quantity of satire sharpens the intellect unto perfection ; it is the whetstone of many virtues, and is respected when its playful counterfeit is run down by temper and good sense. Sir Charles Barnett had taken a wife to help him to support his waning state ; but he had not calculated on eclipse ; he never considered it possible that a country girl should gain any admiration save for her beauty, and he by no mean relished the universal homage rendered to her marvellous wisdom and sound judgment.

The president of the Royal Academy painted her portrait during her second season, and with his usual skill completed a

picture that would have made Titian jealous. Lady Barnett looked at it for some time in silence; and then turning to the polished artist, she observed, "It is beautiful, but you know what it needs to make it like me."

"Lady," he replied, with admirable tact, "it wants A SIGH UPON THE LIP."

And he was right.

"My dear Lady Barnett, I have a little request to make of you, this evening," said Sir Charles, "it is that you will not enter into any conversation with the Russian envoy about the plans *we*" (the mean creature had had nothing to do with them) "adopted for the education of the poor in Leicestershire; if he speaks again upon the subject, refer him to *me*. And I really wish you would not agree with Lord Somerton's notions about literature; he invariably contradicts me, and therefore, oblige me by not conversing with him."

"I do not agree with you, but will do as you desire."

"I think we shall confine our parties this season, to dinners, concerts, and card-assemblies. Balls" (Sir Charles had lately been afflicted with gout) "are really incorrect, since the introduction of waltzes."

"I am glad to find that your ideas of correctness are improving," replied his lady. Sir Charles winced.

Will it be believed that the very man who was lecturing and directing this high-souled woman on such trifling points, was continuing (almost openly) in the practice of what the uninitiated would call "gross immorality," but what the well-bred delicately classify as a *liaison*. Oh, this twisting and mooting of terms! this cloaking of all that is abominable under the banner of "human frailty!" this glossing and polishing of vice! this burning of incense in high places, and bending the knee to the Baal! How does the free-born soul sicken at, and loathe, such homage! God forbid that I should for a moment wish to see the levelling of rank, or the decent barriers of society overthrown. I honour the one, and respect the other; but vice is vice, though a coronet bind the brow; and virtue is as holy in a peasant's cottage as in a ducal palace. How many are worshipped, literally, during the season in London, because of their fêtes, and splendour, who would not be tolerated in what is termed decent society, were it not for "station." Lady Barnett felt this deeply; and while she was idolized, loathed the idolatry. Not that she was insensible to praise or applause;—what woman is, what woman ought to be? but she longed for a devotion, which she knew, as a wife, there was but one who could render. She wished to be the object of a warm and

fervid affection, as she had once been. She was constantly the victim of her penetration, and sometimes wished that God had, in his mercy, bestowed upon her less feeling and more folly. There was one thing, and one only, that yielded her pleasure: she had an extended sphere of doing good; and the manner in which she threw her entire soul into relieving the necessities of others, often excited in her worldly-minded husband an astonishment he did not deem it necessary to conceal.

“I cannot think, Marian, why you are so anxious about the dead curate of Lyme’s daughters: one is deaf, and the other blind; moreover, nobody knows them.”

“Simply, Sir Charles, because their father is dead, one deaf, the other blind, and nobody knows them.”

Sir Charles muttering something about “bad habits contracted through a defective education, and wild Irish views of manners and society;” and the once free-hearted Marian listened, as she had often listened, patiently: “for patience is the badge of all her tribe.”

Would those who crowded her splendid saloons, and were astonished at her taste and calm majestic beauty,—would they have believed that the canker was busy at a heart, where sorrow had made its sepulchre?

“Lady Barnett,” enquired one of her visitors, casually taking up a morning paper from amid the heap of periodical literature with which it is customary to heap a library-table, “do you ever read our political journals?”

“Hardly ever.”

“We continue gaining victory on victory; indeed, Napoleon must soon evacuate Spain and Portugal.”

Marian could never hear any allusion to the Peninsular campaign without emotion; her heart beat violently as the gentleman continued—

“So, I see an exchange of prisoners has lately been effected; some Irish names, too, among the number. You must surely be interested in them, Lady Barnett? Calvert O’Connell, lieutenant in the 3d dragoons; Barry St. Leger—ay, all the St. Legers were brave fellows; Henry O’Donnell, captain in the royal Irish——”

Marian seized the journal from the grasp of the astonished loungee, and in another moment—the paper clasped within her hands, her eyes starting from their sockets—she had fallen back on the sofa, not in a fainting fit, but in strong and terrific convulsions.

“And so Marian,—you are a wedded wife! and though now, three seasons, the star of the ascendant, I hear you are still triumphant. Long may you continue so—if it makes you happy! I have been more than three years a miserable prisoner, without one friend, who remembered Harry O'Donnell sufficiently to be interested in his exchange, which only chance has effected. I do not, lady, blame you;—you doubtless fancied I was dead; for you could not have been so altered, as not to have felt some anxiety for *your cousin's* liberty.

“I intended paying my respects, in the course of the morning, to you and Sir Charles;—to whom I beg my respects. You will not be surprised at my strange hand-writing, when you hear that I lost an arm at Albuera! HENRY O'DONNELL.”

It was more than a month since Lady Barnett had learned that Harry—her first—her only love—was in existence. When questioned by her husband as to the cause of her sudden illness, she told him all the truth. “If,” she said, within her own bosom—“If Sir Charles suspects me—at all events I shall have the satisfaction of not deserving his suspicion.”

“Was it joy or sorrow?” enquired her tormentor—“that occasioned your Ladyship's agitation?”

“Sir Charles,” she replied, “do not trifle with feelings that have ever been laid bare before you. I do not deny your *right* to ask that question; and I reply frankly—that it was a mingling of both.”

Her husband gazed steadily upon her; and her dark deep eye,—her broad high forehead,—and her fine pale features,—neither quailed nor shrank from the scrutiny;—even Sir Charles was moved.

“Marian,” he said, “you are a noble woman, but not suited either for me or for the present times;—you should have remained among the stars, until a holier sun shone upon England. I never met woman with truth like yours.”

The involuntary tribute of such applause, paid by Vice to Virtue, is great indeed! Marian wept long, and bitterly;—in the silence of her chamber, she prayed;—and they who know how hard it is to wish that those we love may not love in return, will appreciate her petition. She prayed that Harry would only remember her as his cousin. When she thought of the many changes she had seen men make, without an effort, she indulged in what may be termed the *painful hope*, that he might find it, perhaps had already found it, easy to look upon and love another. There was something in the tone of Captain

O'Donnell's letter that repressed this conviction. I have heard many women assert, after receiving a declaration of love, that—"indeed they had no idea of such a thing; they never thought the gentleman entertained the slightest affection for them:"—it might be true; but I never believed a word they said. Men are, doubtless, clever enough; but clever as they are, women, on this subject are seldom—*never* at fault;—they have an intuitive knowledge of man's affection;—they generally know it before he is aware of it himself;—and though man can easily *assume* an affection he does not feel, he must be a better adept in concealment than I can imagine possible, to hide a preference. The one phrase,—“if it makes you happy,”—showed at once his anxiety, and his belief that she was miserable. The precious letter was more than half-way to her lips, yet she stayed its course, with a firmness those who have loved like her will estimate, and laid it on her desk. In a few moments she arose; and, with the letter in her hand, proceeded to Sir Charles's study.

“Lost an arm! Sad thing, sad thing,” repeated Sir Charles, after he had finished its persual. “Well, I shall be glad to see him. He is your relative; and we owe it to ourselves to treat our relatives with propriety.”

“I think I must spend the day at Richmond, with Mrs. Brownlowe.”

“No, no, Lady Barnett, it would be exceedingly wrong; you can receive your cousin here. I dare say we shall find him sadly changed.”

Sir Charles, well skilled in human nature, was at fault:—the truth was, that, with the exception of his wife, his intimate female acquaintances had been of a very indifferent stamp; and he fancied that a worn-out mutilated soldier could possess no attractions for one so *fêted* and admired as his charming wife! Lady Barnett, well as she knew his littleness of mind, almost hoped that something like generosity had illumined his dark soul. She, too, was mistaken.

“He loves me still,” she said, while tears of bitter agony coursed each other down her pallid cheeks,—his love has been unchanging as my own—O, what am I, to own it! and he talked of my father, and of Castle Raymond, and the dead lark, and poor Busca! and my husband has been either mad or cruel enough to ask him to stay within these walls. What then? Am I fallen so low as to fear myself?” And the young and proud beauty paced her chamber with unequal steps.

Woman is never in so much danger as when she confides in her own strength. The meek-hearted and trembling find security in weakness, for they look for protection where it is always found,—they seek advice from the Most High, and implicitly employ His precepts as their laws : there is always safety for the humble Christian. According to the correct and established laws of English society, if a married female find not a friend in her husband, she is perfectly and completely cut off from every thing approaching to friendship with the more wise and superior sex. If, trusting to the pure and uncontaminated counsels of her own heart and motives, she seek advice or protection, in any way, directly or indirectly, from any man, no matter how exalted his character, or pure his motives, her reputation is tainted, irrevocably tainted, and therefore nothing worth,—she sinks in the moral scale, and can never retrieve what she has lost. I am willing to allow the hardship of this state ; and yet, valuing as I do the reputation of my high-souled and beautiful countrywomen, more than their individual happiness, I can hardly wish it altered. To this very strictness, to this hardship in peculiar cases, we owe much of our domestic happiness, and all our good fame,—a fame that was never tainted, until an assumption of foreign manners (that sit as ill upon us as foreign fashions) rendered many, too many of those in high places, open to the scorn of the right-minded. “What,” it may be asked, “is a woman to do who is married to a brute or a fool?—Is she to have no friend, no companion?” I answer, None ; she either made her election, or it was forced upon her ; but, in either case, she owes it to her God, to her sex, and to her country, to bear her cross, and prove that she rises superior to the ills that are heaped on her devoted head. No matter how pure may be her motives, the world reads actions, and not hearts.

Lady Barnett believed that her cousin was as high-souled as herself ; she remembered how strict his notions had been, and how often he had chid and reproved the volatility of disposition that had, at one period of her existence, rendered her so gay and thoughtless. She had read deeply too the records of human life, yet it never occurred to her to bring her observations to bear upon her cousin :—“He taught me ever what was best and wisest, and to whom can I look with greater safety for advice if I should need it?” With this feeling she scrupled not to consult her cousin upon many points unconnected with her husband, or the domestic differences, that, despite of her care and real attention to prevent, sprang up between them. Her innate propriety, more than her judgment,

counselled her not to suffer any interference upon such points ; and, on all other matters, her vanity was gratified to find that her monitor agreed with her in all things.

It must also be confessed, that though at first she had shrunk from meeting her cousin, yet, after that meeting was over, she experienced a tranquillity, a security in his presence, to which she had long been a stranger. She had never enjoyed the sweet privilege of appealing, with all her feelings, to her husband. Though she had never used concealment, she could not be said to have reposed confidence,—that full, perfect, and happy confidence, which is the out-pouring of an affectionate heart, and forms a true earthly paradise. Her vivid imagination, that had so long communed with heaven, had again found an earthly object upon whom to lean,—and “Cousin Harry,” as before, was even more the mind’s idol than he had been at Castle Raymond. *There* he had been her leading star:—the idea, the possibility of his being *changed*, had never once occurred to Marian ; she looked to him to strengthen her good resolves, *not* to overturn them.

Of all things likely to suffer change, nothing changes like man ! With women the case is different ; events with them are things of rare occurrence, and there is little chance of one rubbing out the record of another. The impression has time, not only to be made, but, consequently, is not easily effaced. Men fall rapidly into various societies, and hear various opinions : this occasions them to be less firm, or, to use a harsher term, less obstinate. It may be for good ;—it may be for evil. We shall see.

Captain O'Donnell was almost domesticated in Sir Charles Barnett's house, and people did begin to say, that “they wondered,”—“were surprised,”—“astonished,”—“suspected,”—“hoped not.”—“Lady Barnett, so beautiful.”—“What could she see in him !”—“Husband careless,”—“used her harshly ;”—and, at last, some of these whispers absolutely reached the ear of Sir Charles. With a violence totally uncalled for, he assailed and reproached his wife. She replied with her usual truth and dignity,—for one criminal idea,—one feeling that angels could pronounce impure,—had never stained her soul. Yet she had stood on the brink of a precipice, and blessed, a thousand times blessed was the power that told her of her danger !

“I will tell Harry that he must depart,” she said ; “and his sense of propriety will point out to him the necessity for doing so.”

It was more easily said than done. The time came, and

brought its trial. With the instinctive propriety and delicacy of a virtuous woman, she avoided the reason why, and told him only of the fact. Little was she prepared for his comment;—little did she dream of his moving from the high and honourable pedestal, on which her imagination, more than his own merits, had placed him. The idea of Henry O'Donnell having become “a man of the world,” as the phrase goes;—of those bland and fascinating manners being only the polished surface; and the certainty that Continental example and habit had sullied that true and noble spirit which she imagined was more than proof against contamination, fell slowly, but heavily, upon her feeling heart.

“I see how it is,” he said; “Sir Charles is jealous. I thought the world would whisper.”

“You thought the world would whisper!” repeated Lady Barnett. “You thought it, and yet you remained near me!”

“Marian,” he replied mournfully; “you have not now to learn, how dearer far than life you are to me; the only living creature of my kin; the only being who binds me to existence. You are not happy, and yet you would separate those whose lives depend upon being near each other. All I have asked is your society, and that you would not surely refuse your cousin!”

Marian could not repeat all that Sir Charles had said; she could only entreat, command O'Donnell's departure; and to her honour be it recorded, she did so firmly—she neither quailed nor wavered in her mandate,—yet could she not utter the reproaches that grew upon her lip, at his acknowledging that he expected the world would notice and misconstrue his attentions; while anticipating this result, he had yet remained.

It was now vain for him to seek her pity, by a representation of his utter loneliness, and by drawing a true but melancholy portrait of what her situation would be when deprived of her only *friend*. Her resolution was taken; she saw and parted from her cousin. Letter after letter were delivered to her, but she returned them unopened. “I might read all he could say,” she would repeat to herself, “but I will not. I might read without danger, for he is not now what he once was.” This was true; but when she imagined, in her hours of indignation, that he had become a being of no importance in her eyes, she erred in judgment.

The season drew towards its termination, Sir Charles became worse, and was more morose than ever. He had been a good deal disappointed lately;—had not produced as good an effect in the house as he had anticipated; and somehow or

other, Lady Barnett was not as attractive as usual. Hints were followed by direct charges, and the usual recriminations succeeded. It was in vain that Marian recalled to his remembrance her ingenuous disclosures, her aversion to meet her cousin, and the promptness with which, on Sir Charles's first intimation, she sacrificed all her feelings to his wishes. He saw that she was heart-broken, and, with the characteristic of a perfect tyrant, he persisted in his torture; coolly communicating, as the termination of his discourse, that she should immediately accompany him to Castle Raymond; "the most out-of-the-way place," as he observed, "and of course the best to hide his disgrace." How her proud heart beat within her bosom! And when, long after midnight, she reasoned herself into the submission which, as a wife, she felt was her first duty, she knelt, and pressed her throbbing brow within her small white palms, and prayed fervently to the Almighty to strengthen her in all good things. She thanked Him too, in that He had mercifully taught her, ere it was too late, the painful, the agonizing truth, that he on whom she had bestowed a love, far nearer to devotion than to any earthly passion, was all too tainted to dwell in her remembrance, save as a vision of the past; which, like the lark of her young days, had soared towards heaven, yet found its death on earth.

"Troth, Nurse Grady, and it must be yerself that's glad to get the young misthress back," said our former acquaintance, Nelly Riley, to the nurse of Castle Raymond; "and she's looking very poorly; and not, by no manner o' means, as handsome, to my thinking, as before she wint away."

"She can't be blind to poor Sir Charles's fate," replied the sapient nurse;—"he's had the gout in his stomach twinty times; and it'll choke him some of those days;—and thin we'll have a new masther, I'm thinking."

"Is't the captain ye mean? Arrah! be asey, now;—I wish her betther luck. The captain, my lannan's more changed nor any of'em;—Sir Charles is the ould thing, that, as I've often said, would make broth of his father's bones. My Lady's heart, God bless it! is the same as ever,—a beautiful heart she has! It's useless trying to turn May butter into flint stone;—but the captain has got foreign hurling in his head—and don't tell me—if he had true regard for his cousin, he wouldn't visit the gamekeeper's daughter so often ——"

"My Lady," replied the nurse, bridling, "knows nothing of his even being in the counthrey;—How should she? And as to

the gamekeeper's daughter—Did Master Harry tell you it *was* the daughter he visited?—mightn't he have a regard for the father, Mrs. Riley?"

"Mrs. Grady, Ma'am," replied the shrewd Irishwoman; "you have a mighty great regard for fine French silk handkerchiefs, and a fine decket o' corral bades. I tould you my mind a-fore; and I'll tell it you again if you like, and make a clane breast at onc't;—but, may be, betther not; time tells all things."

In a few weeks, the death of Sir Charles Barnett was duly announced in all the fashionable journals;—and though, from what we know, Lady Barnett could not be called inconsolable, yet she behaved as was right and fitting her to do; nay, she did more,—she watched her husband to the last;—she tried to turn his thoughts towards that source from whence she had derived consolation; and she both prayed and wept when all was indeed over. Among all her trials, she had one consolation;—he blessed her with his dying breath, and requested her forgiveness.

Her year of mourning was expired;—perhaps the most tranquil year of her existence. Still young, with renovated beauty and a large fortune, Lady Barnett was talked of, and toasted, far more than when her young heart beat, and her gleesome laugh sounded amid the groves and hills of Castle Raymond.

Much was she tempted to revisit London;—she had become a mark for all speculating fortune-hunters, whether male or female; and, if her intimacy with her cousin had ever cast a cloud over her fame, it had passed as shadows from a brilliant landscape.

But though others ceased to remember, she had not forgotten. I have said that Henry O'Donnell was a man of the world, and as such, it will be readily believed, he did not relinquish the idea that he might still be master of Castle Raymond and its fair mistress. He had wisely withdrawn from the country on Sir Charles's death, well knowing that Marian's delicacy would shrink from his intruding at such a time; and when he did return, he managed to be introduced so as to avoid alarming her prejudices or creating any unpleasant sensations.

It must not be imagined that O'Donnell was what would be considered either a bad or a heartless man; when he reasoned he was invariably right; when under the influence of his passions, fearfully wrong; his mind had become imbued with a false philosophy, and it was convenient to be the disciple of a

school that granted much license. He loved Marian ; but he loved her as a woman, without caring for, or comprehending her true nobleness of soul. He had seen much of life and the life of a soldier-prisoner had little in it to strengthen what might have been good. After he left London he visited the scenes of his childhood, and the turf-raised-mount to the memory of the dead lark ; and the attention paid by the old gardener to Busca, by his lady's express command, confirmed Henry in the belief that she was unchanged. She was a living instance of the romance of life lingering and dwelling with advancing years. O'Donnell admired virtue and glory in the abstract, without possessing either the firmness, which is the groundwork of the one, or the enterprise necessary for the other. There is an undying essence in woman's love, which, like the costly perfume, endures after the vase that contained it is broken, and clings even to the hand of its destroyer. How Marian had loved is already shown ; it now remains only to prove, what life proves daily—though books, often at variance with human nature, are too fond of setting forth love in the conclusion requited, and an end of triumph crowning a life of pain—that perfect happiness is as much a fable as unbroken sunshine, and would be as wearisome, and as destructive. He who knows and orders best has willed it otherwise, and has suffered that the wickedness of some should draw forth the virtues of others, and those who trust in him in heart and spirit will feel that all is good.

It was a clear, calm evening, and the mistress of Castle Raymond was alone in her own halls. She had discarded the robes of mourning, and reclined in jewelled state in a room redolent of perfume.

Her thoughts were of a second marriage, and one that she had not determined on without some fears and some misgivings ; but woman's unassisted wisdom is little worth, when set against the strength of an affection which had grown with her growth, and outlived both time and sorrow. Her eye rested on the wedding-ring, which still encircled her taper finger—it appeared to her an unhallowed badge—she slowly removed it, and, with a trembling hand, and a blushing cheek, tried on another, which she took from a small red case. The sound of a distant footstep smote upon her ear, and, blushing still more deeply, she replaced the mystic bauble in its rest, and the other emblem of her wedded state upon her finger.—As the evening deepened, and she continued still alone, she thought

upon her cousin's faults; and what had appeared so criminal when it would have been sinful to have loved, had dwindled into a marvellously short catalogue of faults—failings rather—which she could hardly tell over: her imagination wandered to the scenes of her early and of her present happiness—and she scouted from her memory the remembrance of her married life, as one would cast forth a loathsome object from what was otherwise cheerful and smiling. Harry's natural generosity of disposition had prompted him to enter into all her plans for the good of her tenantry. The village of Castle Cloyne was now clean and cheerful; its inhabitants felt themselves raised in the scale of society—and that is the true way of ensuring an Irishman's gratitude; the hills within sight of Castle Raymond were covered with cattle, the property of zealous and industrious farmers, who, if they did not manage quite as well as their English neighbours, yet promised, to be all within a little time, that their best friends could desire.

Marian revolved and re-revolved all her plans and projects for future happiness; and if a doubt did arise, as to what her former fashionable friends might say, rather than analyse her feelings, she contented herself with the consideration, that she should not mix with them again—that she should be far away from their sneers, and their comments—that she should be happy in her own dear country—happy amid the unsophisticated peasantry, who looked to her for all their comforts—happy with the chosen of her heart! in her youth's first and only affection. Generous, and free-hearted in action as well as thought, Marian settled upon O'Donnell all the Raymond property. "He must be perfectly independent of me," argued the noble creature, "to render his happiness equal to my own." Her lover was all gratitude and thankfulness, and remonstrated much against that of which he secretly approved: but I must not do him injustice: his cousin's generosity touched his heart more than her other virtues—he could comprehend the one, but not the other.

They were married.

Those who truly and devotedly love, will understand me when I say, that Marian was as happy as woman could be for some months after her marriage—I had almost written that she was tumultuously happy;—but it pleased God that her health grew feeble in a little time, and though she did not suffer pain, she could not wander about with her beloved, as in former days. She hardly felt the privation while he was with her; but, though invariably kind, and even affectionate,

Marian had discovered what, had she not loved too well, she might have known before—that upon the most important of all subjects they greatly disagreed. She had learned to trace the wisdom and the bounty of the *Almighty* in his works—she could read “good in every thing;” she saw his glory in the firmament, his wonders in the flood; she had grown practically pious, from a deep sense and knowledge that in the belief and hope, springing only from true religion, was there refuge for the broken-hearted, or an unerring guide through the mazes of the world: her religion had been the result of experience—she had seen its good, and felt its advantage—and while she longed for the time when her husband would join with her in prayer and praise, she yet dreaded lest her very efforts to make him what she wished, might fail, and drive him further from the belief in which she trusted.

Another year had passed; and again the mistress of Castle Raymond was seated alone in the same apartment in which we once saw her try on the token of her new contract. Colonel O'Donnell (for money achieves rank) had been absent on business, and his wife, more impatiently than usual, awaited his return. As she threw open the casement windows, shaded by a rich drapery of pink and silver, and stepped forth upon the marble terrace that overlooked the lawn—the beams of the harvest moon shed a flood of light and glory upon her head; yet her step was somewhat feeble, and she threw her arm round one of the pillars of the colonnade to support her in a spot where she could hear the approaching tread of his horse's hoofs, long before they entered the avenue of fragrant lime leading to the castle. Suddenly a female sprang upon the terrace, and stood beside the lady so silently, that Marian, unaccustomed as she was to fear, would have called to her servants, had not the stranger, by an energetic movement, intreated her to forbear. She looked upon the pale, attenuated figure enveloped in a deep scarlet cloak; and as the hood, which had been drawn over the woman's face, fell back, Marian thought she recognized the features.

“You've forgotten me, lady, and no wonder,” said the stranger, “I deserve that you should—and I only pray the blessed Virgin that I wasn't myself—God break hard fortune before every honest man's child!”

“I remember you now, Mary Deane,” said Marian, “but it is impossible for me to remember one I have been so long

without seeing—can I do any thing for you, poor girl?”

The woman fell at her feet, and, while she kept her cloak closely clasped around her, sobbed forth a petition “that she wouldn’t turn *agin* her entirely, and use her worse than a dog.”

She had, in truth, little reason to expect such treatment from the mistress of Castle Raymond, who, raising her from the earth, would have led her into the room she had so recently quitted, had not the girl refused to enter.

“Sure I’ve made an oath never to cross *his door*, and don’t ask me, lady, darlint, for I’m a poor unworthy sinner—God-stricken and dying, and willin’ and happy to die, if I was fit,—though I am young, and the only child of my father—and yet, to my sorrow, I’ve heard the white-headed ould man pray that I’d never been born—and worse, lady—worse nor that—I saw him” (and here her words came short and broken)

“I saw him kneel down on his own hearth-stone, and curse me and mine, lady; me and mine!—Oh! why indeed was I born—why indeed was I born!—Yet I call the God who sees into my very heart this minute to witness for me, that, lady, darlint, I meant you no wrong; but he had the winning way with him, and if he could win you, no wonder he bewildered me.”

“Of whom speak you, Mary Deane?” enquired Marian, in a voice of agonizing emotion, dreading she knew not what or whom—“Of whom speak you?”

“Of your husband, lady—of the father of—my child.”

As she answered, her head sank upon her bosom, and throwing open the cloak that had hitherto shrouded her, discovered a sleeping boy upon her bosom.

“’Tis all a falsehood—a fraud got up to—to—drive me mad!” exclaimed Marian, “a base lie—Woman, how dare you slander him?”

“Look at him,” replied Mary Deane—holding the child forward to where the light from a glowing lamp was streaming on the glittering pavement. Marian did look—long and anxiously look—she pushed the small round yellow curls from the boy’s forehead; and as the movement fully roused him from the deep sweet sleep of infancy, he smiled in her face, and clasped his little hands in admiration of some of the rich jewels that glittered on her dress. The smile confirmed the tale; and taught the lady of that noble house, that her most bitter trial was indeed arrived. Sir Charles’s gallantries she had borne with fortitude; they had grievously wounded her

deep sense of religion and morality—they had, moreover, wounded her woman's pride, but they had never seared her heart—they had never entered, and lacerated, and destroyed!

"Tell—tell me one thing," she demanded of the betrayed girl, who still cowered at her feet, "this child was born before our marriage; have you been sinless since?"

A deep and bitter groan was the only answer she received. It was enough.

Marian would have paced the terrace, but she felt as if rooted to the spot whereon she stood. She was iron-bound—spell-bound to the very earth. The child, still in admiration of the brilliant jewels, crept towards her. Her first feeling was to spurn—to thrust it from her; in the madness of the moment her foot was lifted to the act, but she could not, it was HIS child!

The eye of the wretched mother had been fixed upon her infant's movements, and her sad heart beat more quickly when she saw that he was not repulsed.

"What would you with me?" enquired Marian, when she could find utterance. "Speak, and quickly."

"Lady, I am dying,—dying of the same decline that took my mother away soon after I was born. See here." She held forth her arms, white and fleshless; they quivered in the moon-beams. "I am gone, entirely," continued the unfortunate, "and so I ought to be; for the beauty he talked about, went, and HIS love went with it, and I've been almost starvin in a strange parish; and my father's curse, and your goodness, and all together hanging over me like a ban; and I couldn't die asy till I asked yer pardon, and asked——" The mother's eye, which, still bright, gleamed like a lamp within a sepulchre, rested on her child. The glorious creature to whom she spoke, understood the appeal, and, immolating all common feeling, she stooped, and kissed the forehead of the unoffending infant; her silent offering ascended to the throne of the Almighty, a record of a virtuous woman's triumph. Mary Deane knelt, as if to pray, but she could not speak; she could only weep,—weep bitterly. At last she murmured—

"The stamp of the Lord was always on you; and you'll be good to the poor innocent babby, and forget its miserable mother? And now, lady, darlint, if I had only my father's forgiveness;—if I could only hear him take back the curse, I should die thankful; and, may be, the Lord would forgive me."

James Deane was the gamekeeper to whom Nelly Riley had

alluded; and little had poor Marian thought, when interrogating him as to where his daughter had gone, that he had so much cause for sorrow, and yet kept it within his bosom, lest it might poison his lady's happiness.

"I will see your father myself to-morrow, and intreat him for you."

"God in heaven bless you for that thought; but to-morrow, lady! *to-morrow will be too late!* I am dying now!"

"Follow me, then," replied Marian, "he must not refuse pardon when *I* ask it."

"And my child?" Mary Deane trembled violently, as she looked upon him for the last time.

"Leave him here. Have I not promised?" said Marian.

"You have, you have, lady. Och, lady dear! forgive me; I am a poor, miserable, wicked wretch, but och hone! och hone! *am I not a mother?* Sure an' I brought ye into the world, a lannan," she continued, apostrophising the child, whom she held closely to her bosom, "I brought you into the world, a perfect and beautiful boy; and I exulted over you; and when your little lip smiled on me, and your daushy fingers twisted in my hair,—God and the Virgin forgive me! but I felt as if I could bear all the sufferings that war ever suffered, and all the sin that ever was sinned, for yer sake; and I thought, that though *he* might change to *me*, he never could change to *you*, for warn't you his own, own child?"

"Come, come," said Marian, hoarsely—for every word the creature spoke was a fresh dagger in her heart,—"*the child is safe; are you not satisfied with my word?*"

"Ay, ay, lady; God bless—bless you, lady, *but you are not his mother.* My heart's darlint! it isn't my eyes will watch you agin in the night; it isn't my ear will listen for yer breath-in'; and, may be—may be, my own a coushla! you'll never know that poor Mary Deane was yer mother; and so best—so best; for when *he* turned, who knows but *you* may turn as well!" She imprinted a long, long kiss upon the child's lips, who, accustomed to her caresses, had fallen asleep.

"You will see him again," murmured Marian.

"Never! never! never!" she replied, wildly, "and now I have looked my last!" She suffered the long red cloak to drop from her shoulders, and rolling the child in it, laid him on the marble step that skirted the entrance; kneeling over him, she muttered a few short words, and then, slowly rising, she crossed her colourless arms upon her bosom, and said, "Now, God willin', I am ready."

Marian removed with her own hands the sleeping infant to a place of greater security, and, followed by Mary Deane, (whose fleshless form seemed moved and urged forward by supernatural strength,) she took her way to the gamekeeper's cottage. As they crossed the park, the tread of Colonel O'Donnell's horses came suddenly upon them: the two females stood behind a group of sapling oaks, as he and his servant passed; they both clung to the boughs of the young trees for support; but, as they rode onwards, Mary Deane stretched forward so as to catch a look of his departing shadow, while his wife, who not an hour before had so anxiously waited his return, remained erect on the spot, more like a statue of carved marble than a thing of life, for many minutes after the sound had ceased.

The old gamekeeper opened the door of his cottage himself to Marian's knock, and appeared almost terrified at seeing his mistress. His daughter had crouched behind her as she entered, and could neither stand nor speak.

"I am come, Deane," said his mistress, "to ask you to forgive your penitent girl. James Deane, *I* have forgiven her. I have taken her child into my house, and you must not refuse her, at such a time as this, her father's blessing."

The old white-headed man clasped his hands, and remained for some time silent; his wretched child crawled to his knees, and her long yellow hair entwined around his feet; she dared not look into her father's face.

"Deane, Deane, I intreat—I command you to forgive her!" reiterated the lady.

The old man looked as if he could scarcely comprehend her words.

"Father, father! oh, quickly, for I am dying!" Mary Deane at length exclaimed. He raised her to his bosom, and as he parted the long hair that shadowed her face, her head fell upon his shoulder,—her eyes wandered,—her lips, white and livid separated from over her teeth,—her fingers moved convulsively,—and he had just time to say, "God bless you, darling Mary!"—when she again sank upon the earthen floor;—her spirit seemed indeed departed, and Marian, with a true feeling of humanity, knelt to support her head. The dying creature opened her eyes, and fixing their glare upon the lady's face, three or four times repeated, "Not cursed, not cursed—my boy—my child—" and expired.

That same night, Marian O'Donnel conducted her husband to a quiet chamber, not very distant from her own; and drawing the curtains of a small bed, showed him his sleeping child. She stood for a moment so as to cast the full light of the candle upon his beautiful face, and then stooping down, she calmly kissed his forehead.

“The gamekeeper’s daughter died, not three hours since, Henry, and I promised *her* to watch over *your* child. You have not known me, I think, as I deserved: may God forgive you for the poor heart you have broken, and the heart”—she turned proudly away, for tears were coming, and she would not let him see them fall.

What followed? No reproaches—no scenes—no storms. She knew and felt that she was still his wife, and that no matter how he performed his duty, she must not swerve from hers. Those who knew her best saw indeed that her eye became sunk, her step languid, and noted that her voice, ever sweetly musical, had grown like the sighing of a wounded bird; but she never told her feelings; she buried them within her bosom; and, after a few years, they produced as their fruitage—death. The iron had entered her soul, and not all the efforts made by a husband, who at last became convinced of her inestimable worth, could withdraw it. Could she have loved him less, her sufferings might have been mitigated; but, though conscious of his faults, the affection of her childhood remained pure, spotless, and devoted to the last, and all that could be said was what is said every day of many a devoted woman, “How grievous was the sacrifice!” Yet how great was her example! how glorious her triumph! Long before her death, she was blessed by the conviction that at last O'Donnel trusted as fully, as perfectly as herself, to his Redeemer’s merits. The delightful certainty of meeting him, a holy and purified spirit, “where sorrow and sighing shall be no more,” was a bliss she would not have exchanged for worlds; the pomps and pageantries of life were poor and worthless compared to her spiritual glory; and she left this, only to be perfected in another world. Her motto had been “Deeds, not words.” Her grateful feeling to the *Most High* was proved by acts of love, of forbearance, and of charity to her fellow-beings; and while the hearts of many will wonder at her forbearance, I feel inclined to assure those who are thus tried—and, alas! I grieve to know that many are so situated—that, hard as it may appear, they can only fulfil their duty to heaven and earth by—
“Doing likewise.”

THE OLD MAID.

The Trials of Millicent Morrison.

“Poor old maidens.”—OLD SONG.

THE lady who accompanied the children whom I had so often admired, was a slight, thin, narrow-looking person, of what is termed “a certain age;” such certain age being of all others decidedly the most uncertain. When once an unmarried female passes thirty, until she is incontrovertibly old, wrinkled, and blind, she remains, in the estimation of all well-bred persons, “of a certain age;” and has to undergo the various taunts, sneers, and suspicions, which are unhesitatingly lavished upon the sisterhood:—“As particular as an old maid,”—“as fidgety as an old maid,”—“as cranky as an old maid,”—“disagreeable old maid,”—and “ugly old maid,”—are only a few of the epithets which are unsparingly lavished upon this much ill-used portion of the community. For my own part, I have had, ever since my earliest childhood, an affection for old maids, arising doubtless from the kindness invariably bestowed upon me by two, who were ancient when I was born, and, despite the wear and tear of life, remain of—“an uncertain age” at this present moment. Their capacious pockets were ever crammed with sweetmeats and story-books; and their beautiful sequestered cottage was the rendezvous of all the young persons who loved to do as they liked, and enjoy an undisturbed game of romps. God bless them! they increased my happiness even in my happiest days, and made me enter upon a resolution, which somehow or other I was tempted to forget, of being an old maid myself. But this is little to the purpose of my tale, which I do not profess to be an impartial one, for the reasons I have stated, having had all my life an affection for the dear, prinky, particular old souls, despite the faults, which an existence spent in “blessed singleness,” is too apt to produce. It was at the quiet bathing-place called Bognor that I first saw my heroine; and I hope the bright eyes now fixed upon this page, will join me in my predilection by the time they are withdrawn from it—for, in all its leading features, it is a true portrait. If I fail in exciting the attention of my readers, it will be *my* fault, not Milly’s.

I had often admired three beautiful children, who were attended by a good-looking woman of colour in their excursions along the strand,—a boy and two girls, healthy, and singularly

handsome. Loving the society of young people, when they do not disturb the time allotted to reading or writing, I soon became acquainted with my favourites. To one at all involved in the necessary ceremonies of English society, there is something bright and reviving in the frank and unconstrained manners of an animated child: the brilliant smile, the joyous laugh, the gay voice, the bounding step, are like the freshening breezes of the ocean after suffering beneath a burning sky; they come, bearing the remembrance of our own early joys. A playful child can always beguile sorrow of its bitterness. I endeavour not to think of what my young playmates may be—I am content with what they are. Those I met at Bognor were all I could desire; and many and many an hour we spent together on the sea-shore, watching for the treasures which the vasty deep threw up upon the beach; collecting sea-weeds, and coralines, and shells—talking of shipwrecks and desolate islands—and, above all, repeating to them that exquisite poem of Mrs. Hemans on the Ocean:—

“The sea! the sea; the glorious sea,
What has the earth so fair,
Of hill, or valley, grove, or lea,
Which with it may compare?
O! I could sit for hours to look
Upon its wide expanse;
And read in its unwritten book,
Fresh charms in every glance.”

The only subject upon which we differed was motion. They used to tire me to death, and expect one, who is not only sedentary from habit, but of necessity, to run and race, and climb and tumble, as much as themselves. This was more than I could well endure; and about four days after the commencement of our friendship, (for children do not acknowledge, by either act and deed, the term acquaintance,) Horace, looking very gravely at me, said, “I wish Milly was come, for though she is not as great a romp, or as fond of fun as you, she could sit and talk to you when you are tired.” “She teaches me French and drawing,” said Julia. “And she knit me these pretty cuffs,” lisped Harriet. “And she makes my kites, and teaches me Latin!” chimed in Horace.

“Indeed,” I replied, “she must be very clever, and very good;—who is she? What don’t you know who Milly is? in Scotland she is called Milly of the Manse, because once she lived at the Manse.” Having given me this piece of satisfactory information, he bounded off to secure a starfish, which the wave had deserted on the strand. I turned to Julia—“Is Milly your aunt?” “No.”

“Your cousin?” “No.” “Your governess?” “No.” I hate such questioning of children; it teaches them both tattling and falsehood, and I enquired no more,—only little Harriet added, “She is our dear friend; not fine, like the grand ladies here, but the best, dearest body in the world, and I won’t have Nurse Maurice call her an old maid.” “Oh! Oh!” said I, “young as you are, you have learned to consider *that* term a badge of disgrace.” No wonder girls should so earnestly go a husband-hunting, with the dread of the pestilential cry ringing in their ears, when they would much rather hear the joy-bells of their parish church, or even the vulgar music of marrow-bones and cleavers. [By the way, I cannot avoid saying, that I agree with Grant Thorburn in considering an old bachelor really an obnoxious animal. Where he has the means of supporting a wife, he ought to have one; besides, the awful power of “popping the question” is in his own hands. And he may rely upon one thing, that be he ever so old, and ever so ugly, ever so openly devoted to celibacy, man-traps and spring-guns are in his path; and if he does not beware, like all who are very, *very* hard to please, he may take the crooked stick at last. So much by way of advice in parentheses.]

At last “Milly” came, and I confess I did not at first find her very prepossessing. Her figure, as I have said, was small and narrow, her shoulders round, or perhaps from constitutional delicacy she stooped rather forward; this, in a short, unmarried woman, I considered rather remarkable, as they generally make it a point to be as erect as possible. Her mouth had a firm, set expression, by no means pleasing; her nose was small and well formed; and her eyes were deep gray, and lustrous—yet was their brightness tempered, as it were, by a certain indefinable discretion; they seldom looked abroad, but seemed retired within themselves, quietly musing upon the affairs of life, rather than wandering amid, or partaking of its excitement; her brow, though somewhat low, was full, and shadowed by a profusion of light hair, which, in her youth, must have been rich and luxuriant; but Time had *there* commenced war with beauty; or, perchance, it might have been sorrow or sickness, that mingled their snows with what had been a superabundance of curling auburn tresses; her throat was beautifully white, though its roundness was gone, but a black velvet band, clasped with a rich ruby brooch (the only ornament she wore) set it off to the best advantage, her entire dress, bearing, and manners, savoured much of what is called puritanism. She would accompany the children to the beach, and, while they wandered about, draw forth her knitting, and,

with her eyes fixed on the wide ocean or the passing clouds; continue her mechanical employment without heeding the passers by, or, so unobtrusive was her appearance, being heeded by them. Or she would read either in a small thick volume, having the appearance of a Bible, or in divers other books, in both ancient and modern binding. She was evidently particular in her dress; her shoes and gloves (her feet and hands, I observed, were delicately formed) were always of superior make and quality, and there was a precision about her dress which led to the belief that she was exact in all things. She did not seem anxious to make my acquaintance, and a nervous tremor in her manner, when conversing with strangers, showed she was either naturally timid, or unused to general society. She blushed, moreover, in addressing you, though, after the awkwardness attending her first salutation had ceased, there was a strange mingling of gentleness and firmness in her conversation. That she was an educated rather than an accomplished woman, was evident; but, though devoted to my three young friends, she did not wish to explain the cause of her affection towards them: not that she affected mystery, but any allusion to their being related to her, or of her kin in any degree, created that species of annoyance which the curious care so little to inflict. Once only, in one of the casual, and somewhat cold, conversations we held together, she observed, that there were ties stronger than those cemented by relationship: with this I perfectly agreed, but added, that it was rather an odd observation for a Scottish woman, whose clan-like sympathies generally pervaded all things. She smiled,—one of those dim, faint smiles which separated her firm-set lips, with an expression of pensive sweetness that accorded well with the gentle meaning of her soft intelligent eyes,—and said, to that very clanlike feeling, which my observation appeared to condemn, they owed both their prosperity and success: “In strange countries, when far away from home,” she continued, “the feelings confined to the Mac Gregors, Mac Phersons, and Mac Allisters, extend to each child of the hill and heather; the Scotsman is everywhere the Scotsman’s friend; and, in my humble opinion, this very circumstance, so often urged against us, is much in our favour: if such were the course adopted towards the children of every country, when away from their natural dwellings, there would be a less number dependent on the charity of strangers.”

I agreed most readily with this assertion, and embraced the opportunity of paying a just tribute to the moral and intellectual worth of those who dwell over the border. She appeared gratified.

I have generally noted that the Scotch are never warm, at first, either in their expressions of pleasure or anger: they are early acquainted with the benefits arising from restraint; they learn it in their mother's arms, herself ever patient and exemplary; they are taught it by their deacons and their pastors; and a knowledge of the world establishes them in the judicious practice of self-control. I never—however meritorious the restraint undoubtedly is—knew a person to be very popular who was very particular on this point. We like to be acquainted with those who now and then make little slips in conduct, and occasionally burst forth into certain extravagances, both of management and temper, because they seem so many palpable excuses for our own misdeeds.

“Horace tells me you are going to leave Bognor, and intend passing a month at Hastings,” said Miss Millicent to me one morning; “will you take a letter for me to a friend of ours there, a Presbyterian clergyman, who has lately fixed his residence in that neighbourhood?”

Of course I agreed.

“Perhaps,” she continued, “you would like his acquaintance: he is a kind, amiable man, not much in your way; but I am sure you would esteem him highly if you knew him.”

I did not exactly know what Miss Millicent meant by his “not being exactly in my way,” nor did I ask: I suppose she considered me too scatter-brained for a grave acquaintance. I shouldn't like to have been told *that*, and I did not wish to put the maiden lady into a situation where it would have been necessary to have said a civil bit of fib,—My readers must forgive me! but my busy mind, ever employed on those delectable buildings, denominated *Châteaux en Espagne*, had settled it, that this Mr. Campbell was some antiquated beau of hers, and that one of these days Millicent Morrison might become Millicent Campbell. Still that would not do; my imagination, stretched to its greatest length, could not fancy her a married woman. What would she be without her little peculiarities? and a marrying woman ought to have none; the very pins confining the folds of her shawl on either shoulder, said, as plainly as pins could say, “We were placed here by maiden fingers.”

Then the white satin bow, at the back of the neat Dunstable straw bonnet, its ends cut exactly into three sharp points, and the two loops of such equal length, that you might fancy the threads were counted; that white satin bow would have stood on end at the idea of the fair hand which arranged its proportions being devoted to any male creature's control: no, that could not be a correct conclusion. Why then did she blush,

when delivering me the letter for "Mr. Campbell?" and why did Horace look cunning, and whisper his sister; and why did the little lady blush, and simper, and look grave at her brother, when he repeated the whisper, as well as to say—"For shame, Horace?"

I wish big and little people would never either whisper or discourse silent eloquence with their eyes, in company; it is really very rude, very,—and very perplexing; for it is so natural to put that and that together,—and draw conclusions,—and worry one's brain about what, after all, is no concern of one's own. Now, as if I had not enough of my own affairs to mind, I continued perplexing myself about the three children and Millicent Morrison—whom I *had* seen,—and about this Mister Jamie Campbell—whom I *had not* seen; and was never fairly content or comfortable, until I had the pleasure of receiving Mr. Campbell, *chez nous*, at St. Leonard's. I love the national accents of all countries,—some more, some less,—they tell always of something that is not present, and set your mind wandering to other lands; they bring to you the sweet south, the sturdy north, the brave and the beautiful of distant countries; the bold or the tranquil landscape is outstretched before you, and often to me comes the memory of much that I shall never see again, when a poor basket-woman in Covent Garden market accosts me in what many a one would call a detestable brogue, with,—“God save you this fine morning, my lady; does your honour want a basket? and any how, whether you does or not, God's fresh blessing be about you!”

Mr. Campbell had not lost the accent of his country, nor had he tried to do so; he appeared a quiet, gentlemanly man, though not altogether what the *élite* would have termed a gentleman; there was a fire in his deep blue eye, quelled, but not extinguished, which I fancied proved him a man of genius. Like most of his countrymen, he possessed considerable literary information, and a great love for music; but one thing I set my head at rest about at once—he would never do for Millicent Morrison:—he was slovenly in his dress, and his shoes, I observed, were tied with black leather twist instead of riband; this would as I said, never do for her. But why, then, did she blush? We shall see.

The following Sunday confirmed my opinion, that Mr Campbell, was a man of genius, and that his talents, far from being hid under a bushel, were brightly burning, kindled by a holy and well-directed zeal for the benefit of his congregation. There was something wild and picturesque in the situation of his little chapel, which called to mind the persecuting days,

when the disciples of the true Faith had not where to lay their heads : it was nested almost in the cleft of the hill-side ; and from the little, clean, and well-preserved platform, which fronted the entrance, you over-looked the wooded valley—the distant town—and the boundless ocean, stretching wide and away ; the sunbeams dancing with his waves, and the blue arch of heaven, untainted on that bright morning by a single cloud, reflected in its bosom. I remember the text he worked upon so beautifully—it was a simple but a joyous one to the believing Christian ; it involved no abstruse doctrinal point ; it was one of those excellent and heaven-constructed sentences which lead the mind from earth to heaven by a single image—

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”

He described fully and forcibly the bitter burden of sin, giving due weight to its temptations and its fascinations in the first instance, but proving how, in the end, it became wearisome to the lightest spirit—how it fretted, and festered, and galled, and oppressed, all who imagined that the pleasures of this life could satisfy that craving after happiness and immortality so inseparable from our nature. After descanting upon the first portion of the sentence, with rare and fervid eloquence he turned to the promise so touchingly given by our Saviour, —“I will give you rest :”—he painted “the rest” signified by the Son of God in colours so holy, that, as for a moment my eyes wandered through the open window upon the outstretched landscape, I felt as if his moral pencil had been dipped in the tranquillity of nature, and drank with thankfulness of the rivers of living waters which his eloquence poured upon a soul thirsting for a knowledge of the love of God :—then came the hymn, and it was impossible to look up to the gorgeous sky, or out upon the bounteous earth, without feeling the positive truth that

“His ways are just, His counsels wise.”

I forgot the slovenly habits, and ceased to think that the shoes were fastened with leather twist ; I even, on my return to St. Leonard’s, indulged in the hope that Millicent Morrison might yet become Milicent Campbell. There is no saying how long this reverie might have continued, had not, Mr. Campbell himself, accompanied by a—*wife*—and three children, overtaken my lagging footsteps. “Mrs. Campbell wished to be introduced to you ; she only returned yesterday from a visit to her father’s, in Argyleshire, or she would have called before.” Alas ! alas ! was poor castle-builder ever so confounded ! I

made the best of it, however, and agreed to take a friendly cup of tea with "the Campbells" the next evening. I will at once pass over the frugal but kind hospitality of my hosts, and only mention, that very soon I heard a story I have never forgotten—a story I have prized and cherished—a tale of forbearance and good faith—converting an old maid into a heroine, exalting my sex as I best love to see them exalted, more by their virtues than their knowledge. The story was of MILLY OF THE MANSE.

"She was a winsome bonny lass, when I first knew her," said Mr. Campbell, "blithe—and before all women I ever met for singing Allan Ramsay's ballads, or the songs of Robbie Burns; she was her father's darling, her mother's pride, and indeed, I may say, the pride of all the congregation; for her father was the pastor of Kirk-Haverling, and lived at Haverling Manse. She certainly," continued Mr. Campbell, after pausing for a moment "was the bonniest and blithest lass I had ever met."

"That may be," observed the minister's wife, "but, Jamie, I never could think Miss Milly as handsome as you say."

"Oh!" replied Mr. Campbell,—I thought, quite as sily as was consistent in a minister,—"she was the bonniest and blithest lass I had ever met *then*; it was before I saw you, Nannie." The respectable "Nannie" smiled a smile that well became her round and ample countenance; and her husband proceeded. "Ronald M'Lean was the only son of the M'Lean, a laird of family and power, but of little wealth; for what remained from ancient times had been spent in keeping up a style and appearance to please the whim of Ronald's mother, an English lady certainly of great beauty. The laird loved her with Scottish truth, and more than Scottish fervour, and cared not what he did so she was pleased. Young Ronald had too much of the spirit of the clan in him to be a great favourite with his English parent, who wished him to be sent to an English school. But this his father stoutly refused; and the boy was accordingly placed under the care of Duncan Morrison of Haverling, who had a rich reputation as a classic, and a still richer as a moral man. I was at that time a pupil in the same house, though under very different circumstances from Ronald M'Lean. He was a laird's son, and I was the only child of the Widow Campbell of Hawthornden—he came to school with a fine footman behind him, I came by myself—he had a horse to carry his luggage, and my store was contained in a handkerchief."

"In a trunk—a small trunk," interrupted Mrs. Campbell.

"No, Nannie, it was my poor mother's best silk handkerchief."

"If it wasn't a hair trunk, it was a box, with may be a handkerchief lapped round it," persisted the worthy woman, anxious for her husband's dignity on all points.

"No, it was only a handkerchief; do I not remember my mother—?"

"Go on," interrupted Mrs. Campbell.

"I will," said the minister; but the handkerchief"—("It was a trunk, I know," murmured Mrs. Campbell, but in so low a tone as to be heard only by me, who sat next her,)—"did not prevent my being treated by all the house, Milly included, as well as if I had been a laird in prospective;—they were happy days, both for me and Ronald, but especially for Ronald, who secured the love of a heart that was above all price. Millicent and the young laird grew together, and studied together, and in all studies where patience and application were necessary, Milly outdid us all: she was the personification of contented industry and innocent enjoyment; the admired of the rich, the beloved of the poor. It was seen by all at the Manse, except Milly's father and mother, that Ronald M'Lean loved her with a strong and fervid affection, such as men, however they may change in other matters, can feel but once—and Milly was not slow in loving in return. I very much doubt if Millicent would have given up her heart so entirely to this affection, had not the lady of M'Lean, much struck with her beauty and acquirements, invited her to spend a few months at M'Lean Castle, an invitation she was proud to accept, and while there the lady treated her with so much kindness, and, as Milly afterwards said, 'so like a mother,' that she felt assured, poor thing! that the proud lady knew and encouraged her attachment towards her son: it was natural enough for her to think so—and indeed Ronald believed the same—natural enough too, in him—though bitter was the struggle, and hard the trial, which taught them the contrary.

"One morning, during her stay with the M'Leans, Milly was sent for to Mrs. M'Lean's dressing-room earlier than usual: and there were the laird and his proud lady, stiff and cold enough; and, instead of kissing her 'Sweet Scotch girl,' as she used on other occasions, she permitted her to stand, while she haughtily enquired, how she had dared to suffer her son to breathe his affection towards her, while under *her* roof? she moreover upbraided her as an artful, designing creature; and concluded by an injunction that she should quit her house for ever, and see her son no more. You may suppose that Milly

waited not to be twice bidden: her knowledge of propriety prevented that, nor, indeed, so bitterly hurt was she, had she the thought or wish to say good-bye to him she loved so dearly. ‘The blessing of the Lord would not be with me,’ she murmured in the silence of her own heart, ‘if I encouraged him in disobedience; and I will show the great lady of M’Lean that I can be as proud as she is.’ ”

“It was a sinful thought,” quoth Mrs. Campbell.

“So it was, Nannie, I’ll allow,” replied her gentle husband; “but there are times, when the wounded spirit stirs within the best of us, and we cannot, without much prayer, command it to be still.”

“That’s true, Jamie,” quoth she again; “you are aye on the side of mercy.”

I was pleased to see, that though she might be a trifle jealous of Millicent Morrison, she honoured her husband’s opinion; and I also observed that her eyes glistened whenever he uttered a sentiment of a good or pious tendency.

“She went home without leaving word or token for poor Ronald, who came to the manse the next day in a woeful taking. By this time her heart had become softened, and she argued moreover with herself, that she might meet him once more, just to bid him good-bye for ever; and seeing him from her window pacing up and down the little flower-garden he had so often assisted her to cultivate, she just slipped on her hood, and stood before him.

“The young man, at first, neither sighed nor spoke, but he looked into her face as he would read her soul, which was then an easy thing, for her mind was as an open book, full of good thoughts and maidenly wisdom, devoid of guile, and simple withal as a mountain dove. I am no way skilled in love passages—they are foolish, and only snares for wisdom, beguiling men and women of their good resolutions; and so it was in this case; for Milly, who, notwithstanding Mrs. M’Lean’s harshness, had formed the resolution of giving up all communion with Ronald, was persuaded, and without her parents’ sanction, to meet him once more in a deep glen, where they had often wandered before it was considered a sin for either to love what to them appeared most lovely upon earth. I cannot altogether acquit Mrs. Morrison of blame in this transaction:—true, the young people had never spoken to her of the affection subsisting between them, but I am sure she knew it, and she ought to have foreseen that, being so much together, with similar pursuits, and a suitable difference of age, nothing was more natural than that they should become attached, in defiance of

prudential considerations. The master himself, poor man, knew nought of such matters; he possessed book-learning enough to stock a university, but he was aye careless of the things of this life, and no ways economical in the management of his homestead."

"I never blamed the Dominie for that," said Mrs. Campbell, "for it is the woman's business; but what I censured the mother for, was the belief she got into her head, that Milly's beauty and Milly's cleverness made her a fit match for e'er a laird in Scotland. Mothers work ill for their daughters instead of good, by such whimsies."

"So they do, Nannie; and yet I mind your turning up your nose at Mrs. Grace, the curate's wife, when she hinted, that her William and our Maggy might be married yet."

Mrs. Campbell laughed, saying only in reply, "But Willy is such a foxy, mischievous ape, and every one says Maggy is so handsome."

"She is very like you, my love," replied the minister, and continued:—

"Milly was at her tryst by the time appointed. She sat on the same bank where she had often sat before with her lover. She looked at the sky; the evening was closing in—the stars, one by one, were stealing up the blue arch of heaven—the dewy softness of night was over the landscape; still he came not—the loved, the looked-for, was not there; her heart beat more quickly—she scanned the hill, the wooded glen—still he came not; there was a perfect stillness in the air and on the earth, and no sound disturbed the serenity of nature, save the occasional bark of the shepherd's dog coming over the mountain, or the plash of the water-fowl in the deep blue lake at her feet. It was a delicious hour, yet she heeded it not; her heart was sair—and at last the unbidden tears rolled down her cheeks as if that heart would break. Suddenly came the sound of a footstep; she dashed the memorials of sorrow away, and the feel of 'Why does he not come? peradventure some evil hath befallen him,' was succeeded by the resolution of assuming an angry manner, though displeasure was far from her heart. In another moment—not Ronald—but the M'Lean himself stood at her side. Now was she indeed alarmed; and grasping the arm of the tall chieftain, demanded, with an earnestness which told her feelings, where Ronald was.

"He seated the trembling girl on the bank, and took his place beside her. M'Lean was a stern, but not a cold-hearted man, and he felt, more than he cared to express at home, for the innocent and artless creature who loved his son with such

devotion; he thought highly of her, for thinking highly of that which belonged to him; and it was some time before he was able to make the communication he knew must be made. Ronald M'Lean had fallen from his horse that morning, and been much injured. He had confided to a favourite servant his desire that Milly should be made acquainted with his misfortune, as an excuse for breaking his appointment. The servant, with the dread of his mistress before his eyes, told her of it; and thus it was that the father, and not the son, kept the expected tryst. 'And now, Millicent, I am come to speak to, to commune with you, not to reproach or chide you for a circumstance which we ought all to have foreseen, and over which, poor girl, as yet, you have had no control. It will not be always thus; for you have reason, and I am about to call upon you to exercise it, not for your own, but for Ronald's benefit.'

" 'Anything for his benefit,' she replied, 'I will gladly do.'

" 'Do you know, Milly, that you have it in your power to establish the house of the M'Lean in all its former grandeur, or to plunge it into deeper difficulties than it has yet known?'

" 'I am sure, laird,'—interrupted Milly, eagerly.

" 'Make no rash promises—nothing rash will I listen to,' said the M'Lean,—'hear me—hear me, calmly: Ronald loves you—loves you now fondly, truly—but young men change—marriage, blessed and holy though it be, cannot always restrain the wandering thoughts of man—and even if you were bound together in the holy bonds of matrimony, Ronald might—nay, I am sure he would, change.' Millicent seemed as though she had not heard aright, and then shook her head. 'Men all change,' repeated the laird.

" 'You were aye accounted a good husband,' observed Milly.

" 'I trust I have been so,' he replied.

" 'Then, laird, you have no changed,' added the minister's daughter; 'and why suppose Ronald unlike his father?'

" M'Lean looked at her for a moment, baffled by her simplicity and good sense. 'But,' said he, 'it was not that I meant to speak of;—have you never heard of Lady Lucy Graham, the heiress of thousands of acres, and thousands to stock them, too?'

" 'The auld maid of Graham Hall?' enquired Milly, quite unsuspectingly.

" 'She is not to say auld—not forty, I should think—nor near. Well, she loves my son, and would give up her houses, her kye, her lands, her money, for the love you hold.'

" 'I dare say she would,' replied Millicent, proudly, 'and

well she might;—houses, kye, and lands,—O! what are they to the love of Ronald M'Lean?' and then, ashamed that she had gone so far, she hid her blushing cheeks between her hands.

"The laird took her hand kindly within his. Intent as he was on other matters, there was something in Milly's love—young, innocent, and beautiful as she was—something in her love for his son so true and blameless, that he was proud of the very beauty of the flower whose innocent bloom he was about to destroy. 'You know, Milly, that Ronald is not rich.'

" 'I do know it, laird; but he is rich enough in the graces and blessings of a great mind—God has been bountiful to the M'Leans.'

" 'Granted; but you heard what his mother said.'

" 'I have no forgotten it, Sir,' replied the maiden, 'and think not so meanly of me as to suppose that, because I kept, or meant to keep tryst with him to-night, it was to be more to him than I have ever been—far, far from it—I would but have bid him farewell,—and tauld him not to think of me—though—though—' she burst into tears, and her head sunk upon her bosom.

" 'I have told you we are not rich, Millicent; I must now tell you more—we are poor.'

" 'A weel! a weel!—' she said, the accent of her native land becoming stronger as her feelings were more wrought upon; 'it is na disgrace.'

"The girl is no fool, thought the laird; and yet I would rather have a fool, or, better still, a woman of the world, to manage, than this right-minded creature; I should know how to deal with the one and the other, but she baffles me.

" 'But it is a disgrace, young woman—a disgrace for a lord, or even a private gentleman, to want the means of keeping up his rank. How would you like to see me—or Ronald—in a gaol?' Millicent clasped her hands and twisted her fingers together, while he continued,—'And yet this must happen—this must be, unless you give him positively up, and refuse of yourself to see or commune with him.'

"She raised her eyes, trembling in the moon-light, to the laird's countenance,—it was still and pale.

" 'I intended to tell him *that*, to-night.'

" 'And to abide by it?'

" 'Yes; I never say one thing and mean another. I meant, laird, to abide by it—unless—' she paused; and then added, 'unless it made him as miserable as I—feared—I thought it would.'

“The laird saw it would never do to go on at this rate, that nothing could be gained by it, and therefore resolved to try his hand at his lady’s plan: he repeated his assurance that such were his embarrassments that a very little time would witness his ruin, unless some decided steps were taken to prevent it; he told her that Ronald could possess the hand of Lady Lucy Graham, if he chose to take it; and that nothing would then be wanting to make them flourish. Again Millicent’s eyes scanned the laird’s countenance, but the expression was changed:—‘And so,’ she said, ‘you would sell your son to save yourself?’ M’Lean grew angry—he reproached her with presumption—he repeated the insinuations his wife had more coarsely used; but, Millicent’s spirit would not brook such treatment. She rose as he rose; and the man of the world saw that more could be accomplished by touching her feelings than rousing her pride. His manner again became gentle; he descanted on the high name brought low—on the trampled in the dust—on the misery that would rest upon her, if she saw a husband, such as Ronald, steeped to the very lips in poverty, with the consciousness that it was *she* who had done this. He assured her that his mother’s curse would rest upon him to the last hour, if their destinies were ever united; and he, therefore, implored her to think of the desolation she would entail upon them all, by persisting in her acquaintance with his son.

“‘Marry Lady Lucy Graham! marry Lady Lucy Graham!’ she repeated time after time—‘And you, laird, think he would marry Lady Lucy Graham?’

“‘I know he would; he told me himself that if it were not for his promise to you, he would marry her at once.’

“‘He said that?’ she added; and again suspiciously perused his countenance. ‘And ye think that, before his life was ended, he would be happier with her than with me?’

“‘God witness for me, I do!’ said the laird. ‘How, think ye, could a M’Lean abide poverty and the disgrace of a prison to any of his kith or kin?’

“With the rapidity of thought Milly’s mind glanced back to Ronald’s habits, Ronald’s tastes, Ronald’s opinions; and the review confirmed his father’s statement: his habits were expensive, his tastes refined, his opinions extravagant. She had often thought so—but, then, he was a laird, and a M’Lean; and she looked upon their rude magnificence as an heritage. After a pause,—and during that pause much that was great, much that was truly noble, rallied in her soul,—she drew forth from her bosom a small pocket-book, and tearing out a

leaf, wrote a few sentences upon it; then, rising from the sward whereon she had knelt to write, she stood before the laird with that right noble dignity of manner which those only possess whose bodies are the temples of living and active virtue.

“ ‘Laird of M’Lean, you come of a noble race; and though it may be but a vain and silly thing, yet I have been taught to believe, that as the richest soil yields the best fruits, so the best blood gives forth the most glorious actions. For myself, I was born in a cottage, I have lived in a cottage, and, God willing, may die in one. We who are so born, and so to die, cannot be expected to understand much that you have said; but you have called God to witness your belief, that before your son’s life was ended, he would be happier with Lady Lucy Graham than with me; *that* God heard—and now sees us both: if such be really your belief, give him this paper—and—then—I shall see his face no more.—If—if—you know of any thing to change your opinion, oh! do not, do not for the sake of the gold that glitters, sell the happiness of such as Ronald M’Lean! And now, laird, God be wi’ you! and from my heart I pray, that you may no’ have cause to mourn for keeping this tryst with Milly of the Manse.’ ”

“ About a week after this Milly went to visit an aunt who was far away in Edinburgh; and before she came back to her father’s manse, the country and the bells had rung with tales and joy—for that the houses of M’Lean and Graham were now one. Before her return home, her mother had died suddenly. Here was a divided grief, and though I thought I understood it all, I could not for my life tell what change had come over Millicent Morrison. She was more useful in the house; as studious in the library; she conversed as freely; but there was certainly a change—little odds and ends of bitterness—not ill-temper either, but positive bitterness would mingle with, or rather, like a wasp’s sting, end her conversations. She was rather watchful than abstracted, and more keen than I had known her—not worldly-minded, and yet looking after trifles; fonder than I thought quite beseemed a woman of diving into people’s motives; not so fond of birds or flowers, as she used to be, for those are the affections of a simple and unseared mind. She was not much thinner, nor much paler, but her features had acquired the acuteness of her mind; in short, I cannot tell how it was—but Milly *was* changed.”

“ That was about the time I’m thinking you fell in love with her yerself,” said Mrs. Campbell, taking advantage of the minister’s pause, and saying so between the sobered mirthfulness

of jest, and the seriousness of a remembered displeasure. The good lady's husband blushed, positively blushed, (how odd, and queer, and awkward is a man's blush!) and rubbed his forehead, as if to obliterate the sense of his timidity; and both his wife and myself were malicious enough to enjoy his confusion.

"I will not deny that—I—I—in short, she refused—better, and greater than I—for, notwithstanding the change, Milly of the Manse was the desired of many hearts. And now to the dole of the story;—God forgive old M'Lean and his bitter lady! for how they could ever think that such as Ronald could be happy with Lady Lucy, is what I could never understand; nor could I quite make out how they got him to give up Milly. Disappointed and heart-broken, the poor fellow rushed into all sorts of extravagances; he seemed to care for nothing—to stick at nothing. And at last all the country cried, Shame upon him!—all, all but *one*—there was *one* who never joined the cry that was raised against him—*one* who never believed that he was so very wicked, though he had been tempted to commit grievous sin.

"Ten years had not passed from the time of the auld laird's keeping the tryst of the young, when Castle M'Lean was advertised to be sold by public roup, and Lady Lucy had burst a blood-vessel in a fit of passion, on learning the utter destruction of all her property. Where was Ronald M'Lean? Ronald M'Lean had gone to India. And where was the auld laird, whose family pride had wrought such desolation?—even in the cauld and noisome cell of the gaol he had dreaded. It was night, and the gaol gate was opened to a neat and well-dressed female, who had passed the day within the prison walls—the minister of peace and consolation to the old white-headed chieftain, who had wrecked the happiness of that fair and excellent girl, and with it foundered the hopes and aspirations of his first-born and only son. Poor Millicent! not a week passed without her spending one, and often two days with M'Lean. And it was a calm and holy sight, to see that woman, still lovely and still young, sitting at the old chieftain's feet reading him passages from holy writ, and paying him that homage in which his heart delighted, till the last, which soon arrived, for his spirit was bowed and broken. I forgot to tell you that his wife had never lived to see her son's temporary prosperity; she died before his marriage. When it was known that M'Lean was dead, all the old chiefs seemed to think that it was a point of duty, more, in my mind, connected with their own station than the old gentleman's merits, to give him a

grand funeral, though he might have nearly starved in prison but for the exertions of Milly of the Manse. However, the pall and the pibroch were not wanting, and scores of bare-legged gillies came down from the highlands : and Milly stood at one of the windows in the market-place to see it all pass ; and though the tear of womanly feeling was in her eye, there was an expression of such scorn and contempt upon her lip, that I cared not to look on it a second time.

“ After a lapse of about six years, word came that Ronald M’Lean had married — married again in India ! and all I heard Millicent say, was, ‘ So best.’ But when she made tea for us — (I was staying for a few days, at the time, with her father) — when she made tea for us in the evening, I perceived that her eyes were red, and that she put three times her usual quantity of tea into the teapot, which was uncommon for her, who was so frugal.

“ Now comes the wonder of the story :—a brother of the minister, one whom he had not seen since his boyhood, died in Mexico, and all the accumulated hoards of years on years came to Millicent Morrison, in right of her father ; he, poor body, was nearly childish from age. Here was a change—a wonderful change for Milly, not only in that it made her independent, and even rich, but, that it showed forth her character in its true and perfect light. Poverty had been accounted to her a crime—it had stood between her and her earthly happiness—it had formed a barrier, as it always does, between what might be almost termed the living and the dead : the knowledge that she was poor had made her proud, and cold, and stern ; and fearful that her advances would be repulsed because of her poverty, she made none. Nor would she receive the overtures of strangers kindly, for she thought, ‘ When they find me poor, I shall be insulted :’ this, as she now confesses, was a sinful pride ; but the wealth which puffs up so many, made her gentle and humble as the shorn lamb. It is only a noble mind that can support prosperity, every one tries to bear up against adversity, but prosperity is the touchstone of greatness.

“ The quiet calm smile came back to Millicent’s rigid lip ; gentleness again reigned over all her actions. She was not bitter in word as she had been ; and, as her sphere of doing good increased, she appeared cheerful—almost happy ; yet did I never hear her sing. And, I have marked, a deepened blush would suffuse her cheek, whenever the M’Lean was alluded to, which certainly was not often the case,—for the unfortunate are soon forgotten.

"I had been married some time; the poor auld minister, full of years, had been gathered to his fathers, and a neat white marble slab, raised by the hand of his affectionate daughter, marked out the place of his final rest, in the kirk of Haverling. Milly had settled fairly down into an old maid, and indulged in many of the whimsies which are overlooked in a married woman, but are put down as tokens of the sisterhood when a lady arrives at a certain age. (Oh! Oh! thought I.) She had a gray cat, lively, though not mischievous. She was fond of knitting and patchwork, and woefully particular in the shape and fashioning of the bit ribands to trim her caps and bonnets; but she was actively benevolent—worshipped by the poor—respected by the rich. It might have been, as nearly as I remember, about seven years after the news that Ronald M'Lean was again married in India, that Millicent Morrison came to my house,—for I was the oldest friend of the family in existence,—and after some difficulty, and many sorrowing looks, produced a letter, which she permitted me to transcribe." The minister took it out of his desk.

"When you receive this, Millicent, the hand that pens it will be cold as the clay of this burning country, and the Ronald whom you once, and I would fain hope, always loved, will be then no more. I have heard of you, Milly—heard of your good fortune—and I believe in your faithfulness. My life has been a turbulent dream, beginning in ambition, ending in disappointment. One thing hangs heavily at my heart—my old father—he died in a goal, which would have been utterly desolate but for you. Milly, how great was your revenge!—may God bless—may God reward you—I cannot. My wife will be the bearer of this to England; she is of another country—she knows nothing of European habits, and in Scotland the M'Lean has now no friends; perhaps I deserve it—but *she* does not. There are reasons why she cannot remain here, which you will hear her explain, that is—but—I do hope that you may meet. She is a guileless, simple Indian girl, only a girl—not yet twenty, though the mother of three children; feel for her—pity her—for she loved me, 'not wisely but too well.' You bore our separation like a heroine—she will, I know, only bear it like a woman—and hers will be the same as ours, for an earthly eternity. God bless you, Milly. Love Annable for my sake—no, not for mine, for you ought not to love me, but for her own sweet sake—and farewell—farewell for ever—EVER!

R. M'L."

"And they are come to England?" I said, "They are,"

she replied; and it was the first time I ever saw her weep : now the tears rolled rapidly and heavily down her cheeks, ‘They are come, but he is gone; and though people say that insensibility comes with age,—and I am not young,—God knows how gladly I would have died to save the life of Ronald M’Lean—died to save him for his wife and helpless children; they are at Portsmouth.’

“ ‘And you—?’

“ ‘I am going there directly. I have hired a carriage for the purpose; for it is no’ fit that Ronald M’Lean’s wife and bairns should tramp the country in a public coach, as if they had nae bluid in their veins. If they want wordly gear, they must share of all I have; and whether they do or no, they shall not need a friend.’ ‘You shall not go alone, Miss Milly,’ I replied; ‘I too will welcome M’Lean widow; and I know Mrs. Campbell will be proud to go with us.’ It was Millicent’s first visit to England; and we did all we could to rouse her attention to the scenery, and the difference so palpably existing between Scotland and this cultivated country: but her mind was far away—and at last we agreed it was the wisest plan to leave her to herself. My Nancy enjoyed the journey much; for it was far pleasanter going that way, than being jolted inside a public coach.”

“That’s like ye’r bundle story,” interrupted Mrs. Campbell, turning up her really pretty little nose, “that’s like ye’r bundle story—as if I was never in a private carriage till then;—I’ve been in the Duchess of Buccleugh’s carrriage, before now.” And she looked at him as one should say, “I wish you would not be so blunt before strangers.”

“I remember it,” replied the minister, quietly; “it was when Mistress Laurie Grant, her companion, your own first-cousin, broke her leg, and you went with her to the doctor’s.”

“Never mind—how should you ken. Surely it was her Grace’s carriage, at all events,” replied the worthy woman.

“We found the widow of Ronald M’Lean a poor delicate Indian creature, who could do nothing for herself, and less for others—hardly able to rise off the sofa—with hands that could not work, and feet that could not walk—with a pale brown cheek, and black soft gazelle eyes that seemed fainting for the sun, whose rays they had fed upon in her own bright land: her manners were languid and lady-like, and there was a tone of tender and deep feeling in her low musical voice that rendered her desolate situation ten times more interesting—desolate it indeed was. What her reasons for seeking a re-

fuge in Scotland were, was known only to Millicent and herself; but she made no secret of her straitened circumstances; and her helplessness was the most pitiable I ever witnessed. Added to the languid bearing so characteristic of every Indian, she was languid also from ill health, and her pallid cheek, occasionally flushed by a deep crimson spot, betokened a disease which I shuddered but to think upon. She would sit for hours and days caressing her children, or gazing upon a miniature—*his* likeness—which she always wore round her neck. As soon as she was able to travel, Millicent bore her and hers to her own home; and the widow of the proud house of M'Lean was indebted to the despised Milly of the Manse for food and shelter. My fears as to the dangerous nature of the disease which was preying upon her, from her first arrival in England, were confirmed; the hot-house plant could not bear removal to a colder clime—and she drooped and drooped—and for two years Milly tended her sick bed, until it became the bed of death. It was not one of her least trials that the temper of an Indian, ever hard to bear, was unequal to support with firmness the struggles of departing nature. Millicent was obliged to listen to her complainings, and to endure, as well as she could, the weak petulance of the mother, and the tiresome, tormenting noise (was ever old maid so situated!) of three romping spoiled children. Yet she not only bore them, but was cheerful under all these trials; and God greatly blessed her exertions: for, though that Indian lady's soul was in a state of pitiable darkness when she came to England, before she died she had sought and found the Saviour—and sought and found Him through the instrumentality of the humble Milly. I had remained with M'Lean's wife on one particular evening—and we had enjoyed much profitable conversation during the time. It was a painful, and yet a pleasing thing for me to witness the struggles the poor lady underwent, trying to conquer her constitutional weakness and irritability of temper—the spirit warring against the flesh and the flesh against the spirit. If betrayed into error, she so quickly perceived her fault, and strove so earnestly to remove the predilection to evil, that it was impossible not to love the frail and fragile being who was so quickly hastening to join, as she hoped, her Ronald in another world. As I wished her good night, I thought she appeared more feeble than usual, and her eyes gleamed from out her pale thin countenance with an unearthly brightness. 'This trial will soon pass away now,' I said to Milly, as she followed me to the door. 'The poor children!' sighed Millicent. 'Ay, indeed, the poor children,' I repeated, 'what

will become of them!’ ‘I have no kin,’ she replied; ‘and even if I had, I think that love is stronger than blood: I will be to them as much a mother as I can—and, by the protection of the Lord, and your advice, I trust they will not disgrace their name.’ ‘But, my dear Miss Milly, you are not aware of the fresh trials you are bringing yourself. Norman Cunningham, the late laird’s fourth cousin, has offered to take the boy.’

“‘And breed him up to fish and shoot—without heeding God’s counsel, or caring for man’s—then turn him off into a regiment, to be shot at like a popinjay! No, no—I’ll do my best with the three. You know, I am only an old maid,’ she continued, faintly smiling, ‘and used to trials; and like all things else, they are nothing when you grow accustomed to them. God’s will be done! this care will save the fag end of my life from being spent either selfishly or uselessly; and, may be, the young creatures, when they grow up, will have an affection for her who cared for them all so well;—it takes the desolate feel from about one’s heart, to have something to live for and love.’ This was a long speech for Milly; and I went home through the starlight, pondering upon the dispensations of the Almighty, and thinking to myself, how hard it is for us to pass right judgment upon each other. No one, to see that stiff, formal, particular old maiden, would conjecture that so warm, so generous, so tender a heart dwelt within her bosom—that the love she imbibed in early youth kindled, in its own fitting shrine, a pure and steady flame, which burned as brightly as if it had been fed with smiles—not fanned by sighs. I thought what was there could extinguish woman’s love!—a passion scoffed at by those who cannot comprehend its height, its depth, its strength, its duration: sorrow quenches it not—steep it in tears, they but renovate its lustre; crown it with thorns, the blood that trickles from the wounds is as incense on the altar; talk of death, it laughs at the dagger and the bowl, as if they were but

‘The baseless fabrics of a vision.’”

The minister again paused; his wife rubbed her eyes more than once, and then, with the dew still moist upon their lids, seized her husband’s hand, and kissing it with genuine emotion, forgetful of a stranger’s presence, she exclaimed, “Ah! Jamie Campbell, I wish *I* had been ye’r first love, and then may be you’d have spoken of me as you have spoken of her.” He pressed his wife to his bosom; and, looking in her face, tenderly replied:—

“I spoke of the love of all women, not of one only. I believe

you would do as much for me as Milly did for Ronald M'Lean. Thank God, it is not needed."

"I was right," thought I to myself. "After all—I *was* right—there was an *affaire de cœur* here—and *that* made Milly blush."

"But the lady, Sir?" said I.

"O! yes—I had forgotten her: she fell into a soft sleep, from which she awoke in about an hour and in a low voice called Milly, who came instantly to her side.

"'My children!' said the young Indian mother. In a few moments they were in the room: she kissed them—blessed them all; then taking a small jewell-casket that was under her pillow, she fastened round the neck of her eldest girl poor Ronald's miniature. She then selected a rich clasp of rubies, and placing it in Milly's hand, added, '*His* hair and mine are within this.—Tell me—tell me,' she continued, rallying her strength for the question, 'do you think *he* is in heaven?'

"'Through the Redeemer's mercy, I believe it,' replied Milly, deeply affected.

"'And—I—I—meet him there?' She clasped her hands for a brief space—tried again to speak, but the power was gone; she motioned the children to go near Millicent, who kissed them all, and pressed them in her arms; a light and heavenly smile passed over the lady's beautiful lips; they parted—she moved her hands once—and only once—convulsively—and all was over.

* * * * *

"You know the rest; having of course discovered that the children you so much admired are those of Millicent Morrison's adoption. She has discarded the gray cat, pays for her board and lodging, and, I believe, only suffers one pet, a water-spaniel, to share her attentions with her wards."

"I am astonished," said I, "that Ronald M'Lean did not say more about his son: one would have thought he would have been pleased and proud to transmit his name, a name so old, to posterity."

"I rather think he had learned the emptiness of seeking to keep up appearances without suitable means."

"Poor Milly!"

"GREAT MILLY!" exclaimed the minister, "how delighted I should be, to see all maids, wives, and widows—as useful as Milly of the Manse."

It is astonishing how my predilection for old maids increases!

THE MOTHER

The Trials of Lady Elizabeth Montague.

“I had rather had eleven sons die nobly for their country, than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.”

—————“There is no man in the world
More bound to his mother; yet here he lets me prate,
Like one i' the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life
Shew'd thy dear mother any courtesy.”—CORIOLANUS.

I never but once saw the Lady Elizabeth angry; and then it appeared but a slight thing which excited her displeasure. She had been called to London on some business of moment, and the housekeeper took advantage of the opportunity to dust and arrange the favourite sitting-room. The crimson velvet curtains were withdrawn from their golden bands, and the rich carpet, that had embedded in its luxuriance many a silk-clad foot, was subjected to the rude brushes of two experienced housemaids. Nor was this all—the pictures were taken down; and not a few spider's-webs dislodged from the gilt cornice and the curious carvings of the frame-work that encircled the apartment. In replacing the pictures, the housekeeper unfortunately displaced two miniatures, which had hung the one over the other; they were portraits, and so alike in age, features, colour, size, that it required a quick memory to call to mind that one of them had worn powder: I have since learned, that the frame of the “powdered” picture was of *pure* gold, that of the other only gilt. The one represented a gentleman of some two or three and twenty years old, of a handsome and gracious countenance, with deep blue eyes, and an expanded brow. Perhaps there might have been a more daring look portrayed in the features of the other; but it may be that my imagination conjured up this character, after hearing the history of both. They had hung, as I have said, one above the other, in a little niche, appropriated to them alone—and very pretty they looked—and so thought the housekeeper, good soul! after she had re-arranged them.

“My lady will never know they have been touched,” she said to me; “but, poor dear lady, I don't think she sees the dust as clearly as she used forty years ago, when first she came here, the most beautiful bride that ever the sun shone upon—it's a great blessing to have good eye-sight! and if I don't need it, nobody-does, that has so many trolloping hussies to look after.

—But, as I live, here's my Lady's carriage—well, if ever!—but all's right—I guess I should have got it if the miniatures had not been in their places.”

And away hurried Mistress Margery Rolls, at the head of the household, to welcome home her mistress. Presently I saw the Lady Elizabeth descend the steps of her old-fashioned carriage. A footman, upon whose arm she rested, remained uncovered as she entered the great hall. I fancied her step was feeble; yet it abated nothing of the proud dignity of her carriage—and, in another instant, her voice sounded along the gallery leading to the crimson room, as her favourite sitting-chamber was called. After exchanging a brief, but kind, salutation, with one who believes she held much of the favour of this extraordinary woman, her eye rested on the miniatures.

“Who has done this?” she enquired. “Who has presumed to do this?” The housekeeper, trembling—for it was her lady's looks more than her words that alarmed her—confessed something touching “dust and dusting.” Lady Elizabeth heeded nothing of her confession; but, with her own hands, which vibrated with agitation to her fingers' ends, altered the position of the miniatures, placing the one with powder above the other. She then left the apartment, and I did not see her again until the hour of dinner.

There was something so elevated and noble in all the arrangements of Montague House, that it invariably called up the visions of those days, when the baronial hospitality of England formed the theme of harp and song: the magnificent broad oaken staircase, dimly lighted by deep arched windows of coloured glass—the dense dull figures, that seemed to grimly smile from their ancient frames as you descended or ascended the polished stairs—the long intricate galleries, leading from right to left, intersected with nooks, and crossings, and passages, that could not fail to perplex—the superb hangings of the various sleeping apartments, that flashed upon you through the opening doors: some of curiously wrought green velvet patterns, on a white satin ground, which the tint of years had sobered, but not destroyed; others, of crimson, lined with yellow, the draperies folding round the pillars of some ancient bed, rich in white and gold relief—the ancient chapel, where the devotions of the noble Montagues of many a by-gone century had been strangely mingled with the pomps and vanities of this world; the knee, it is true, knelt at the altar, but the hand and eye traced the armorial bearings, in all their intricate and mysterious emblazonings, in the very place where such bravery should be all forgotten; the banner and the flag hung

mouldering from the walls; and the moth found a dwelling and a feast within the time-honoured hassocks, where royalty, if report speaks true, had often prayed; then the superb, and yet grave-looking rooms, leading to each other, the windows opening into a park, where wood and water, hill and dale, vied to take from England its reproach of insipidity; the towering walls, hung with the arts of kingdoms; the pure, and almost embodied, portraits of Vandyke, Lilly, Reynolds, and the gentlemanly Lawrence, and the placid landscapes of Gainsborough, all claiming attention, and demanding tribute from the eye and heart; the cold but magnificent sculpture, standing out, I had almost said, in native grandeur, and rebuking, in its silent dignity, the thoughts that wander to less holy things; the library, stored to the very ceiling with books, those moral treasures of the world, that would fain teach us the sweets of wisdom without giving us to taste of the bitter waters of experience—and then the troops of venerable domestics, silent of foot and lip, attentive both with eye and ear.

The Lady Elizabeth herself—the great—the rich—the noble—or, better still, as she was emphatically called by her people—the GOOD Lady Elizabeth, was in beautiful keeping with Montague House. At the time I tell of, she had completed her sixtieth birth-day. She was tall of stature, and what her figure wanted in roundness, was concealed by the ample folds of her black satin robe, which opened down the front, over a petticoat of the same material;—her sleeves were confined at the elbows, by *cordons* of bullion, and the lower portion was open half way up the arm, so that a full inner sleeve of the most exquisite cambric was seen descending to the hand, where it was terminated by a frill of the richest lace;—her cap was ever of peculiar fashion; and yet, from the fact of its being so adapted to her age and countenance, it excited no observation, except in commendation of its fitness; it was something shaped like the head-dress of the unfortunate Mary Stuart, but a band of crimped crape encircled the under portion of her countenance;—her own hair, of a perfect whiteness, separated over a high but wrinkled brow, and she wore no ornament, except a chain of the finest gold, united at intervals by stars of diamonds, rivalling all I ever saw in brilliancy and quality. It was a noble sight to see that aged lady rise from the head of her table, after dealing forth hospitality to some of the greatest in the land, and sweep through troops of ancient servitors, accompanied by youth, and love, and beauty, across her marble and golden halls—the dispenser of good and of happiness to all around her.

You ask, "Was not she happy?"

"She was a widow—and childless!"

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"You now know," continued Lady Elizabeth, "why I replaced the miniatures; and this manuscript will convince you that, as all is not gold that glitters, so all is not happiness that smiles. You say, you thought me the most enviable person you ever knew;—decide if such be the case, when you have read what I have written. But never look upon human nature without calling to mind a beautiful fable, the spirit of which I remember, though its words have escaped my memory. Jupiter once gave permission to a number of repining mortals to lay down their troubles, provided they agreed to bear, each, the misfortune of his neighbour: to this they joyfully consented; but, when they came to weigh and consider the nature of the new burdens, they begged that Jove would permit them to resume their own.—Lady Elizabeth Montague," continued the lady, "never intends to appear before the world as the author of her own life; but you are a professed studier of human nature—it is the book you love to read—and, if not read deeply, it is a question with me, whether it ought to be perused at all. I have written all I suffered—and much that I thought, during a long half century.—I should have suffered less, had I not inherited, with vast possessions, the distinguishing characteristic of my race,"—the old lady drew herself up with the dignity of an empress, who would use earth as a footstool—"I was **PROUD!**"

I saw that pride had indeed been her besetting sin, for there was a feeling of unquelled pride in the confession; and hardly knowing what to say, I observed, "It was the sin by which angels fell." Lady Elizabeth turned the light of her flashing eye upon me; for a moment it gleamed with unusual brightness, and a smile of mingled scorn and triumph flitted over her aristocratic features; but the flashing of her eye quenched within its own deep socket, and the smile faded, as, pressing my arm with her long thin fingers, she replied, "And the sin by which devils triumphed."

The manuscript was written in a fair Italian hand—stiff and formal; but exact and equal in its proportions. I perused it to the end with an interest which only the *real* occurrences of life can excite.

* * * * *

"I was the sole child of a proud and noble family, branches

of which had intermarried, at different periods, not only into many royal continental families, but had mingled hand and blood with the Tudors, the Plantagenets, and the unfortunate house of Stuart. My mother never forgave either herself or me for that I was born a female, when a heir was so much more desired: but, my father!—my beloved father loved me for myself—and he loved me, too, because, unlike my mother, I delighted in the studies he cherished.

“My mother’s pride was of the abstract and more narrow kind; it was a small weak pride—she was charmed at being a countess, and vexed because, if her husband died, I could not be an earl; but that was all. She had wedded my father for the distinction of a coronet, and he selected her because she was pretty, and belonged to a family which, in the time of the Tudors, had been connected with ours; consequently, my father’s honour was concerned in keeping up the dignity of his relatives. I was fashioned according to the habits of the young ladies of my time, but readily gave in to my father’s love of heraldry and history.

“When I was fifteen, my mother died, and I sorrowed for her, more because England had lost a countess, than that I had been deprived of a parent. I thought it was dreadful that **WE** should be subjected to a shroud—a pall—a coffin! And more than once the question was debated within my own mind, whether my mother was a countess in the spirit world; if she was not, I felt assured she would be very miserable. It must not be inferred from this, that I was ignorant of the grand points and principles of Christianity. Religion, the established religion of England, was a portion of our prerogative: the chaplain read prayers daily in our ancient and beautiful chapel, and said grace after meals, with a correctness which, in due time, entitled him to a rectory; when another succeeded, who performed equally well the duties of his station. A young heiress of sixteen is seldom given to theological controversy; I had every reason to be happy and satisfied with the dispensation of good—I knew of no evil—for my father had a bountiful hand and a liberal heart, and there was neither poverty nor want within our towns or villages. We passed among our people, and blessings greeted us on every side. To the poor he was ever condescending—they were his equals and his superiors who called him proud. Once only, during his life-time, I went to Court; and though my wealth, and what was deemed my beauty, created a great sensation, and the nobles of the land vied for the heiress of Montague, yet we returned within a month to our country halls. The truth is, he was not there

lord paramount,—in a Court crowded with men of equal rank, and doubtless better skilled as courtiers; he could not exist without the homage of the lip—he missed the salutations and the deserved blessings of his tenants—and, having trained me in a strange mixture of pride and usefulness, he expected that I was to be totally unmindful of the adulations and attentions which have so many charms for a young, and not unhandsome woman.

“Offer after offer was rejected, either by my father or myself. I liked to feel my power over hearts as well as acres; and, I confess, I gloried not a little in my triumphs. Yet was I neither a flirt nor a coquette. I was too well principled for the former—too proud to condescend to the latter; and, at one-and-twenty I remained in a state of single blessedness.

“On the day I came of age, my cousin, Edward Montague, arrived at Montague House. He had been abroad for many years, and we had not met since my days of childhood. It was in the carved-hall that the dance and the festa was prepared to do me honour. I sat on an elevated seat at the upper end, surrounded by six young ladies of the first families in the county, who had requested permission to act as my attendants. They were dressed in the costume of the Court of Louis the Fourteenth, the period chosen by me as best calculated to display the gorgeous and brilliant jewels of our house. A tiara of diamonds sparkled on my brow; my zone and armlets were of the same fashion and quality; and tassels of the finest gold, enriched with gems, descended from the zone to my feet. Children, habited as the slaves of eastern lands, moved about the room, flinging incense from their golden censers, and presenting the most odorous flowers to our guests. From behind a curtain of thin crimson silk, at the back of the orchestra, poured forth a flood of light which enchanted every eye; while the harpists, and players on the most delicate instruments, appropriately dressed, appeared as if amid clouds tinted with the most delicate hues of the rainbow. It was, in truth, a gorgeous scene, and one I still love to think upon; for there, elated by the homage of hundreds of friends—(friends?)—my father presented my cousin, Edward Montague, to my remembrance. He had passed, as I have said, many years abroad, and, I knew, had been received with flattering distinctions at almost all the European courts. His person was every where admired, but his learning and chivalrous honour claimed from all the highest consideration. From the moment he first entered, I felt anxious to gain his good opinion, a feeling I had never known before; for it appeared to me as if I had inherited the suf-

frages of all mankind. 'And so,' he said, 'you are really my little cousin, Elizabeth. *Lady Elizabeth*—I remember, you were always too stately as a child to play; now, doubtless, you are too stately as a woman to smile.'

" 'The lady spares her smiles, in pity to her slaves,' said one of my flatterers.

"I shall never forget the look of contempt thrown by my cousin on the speaker; I thought it perfectly uncalled for—indeed, I wondered how any one could feel displeasure in my presence. I spoke to Edward of the ladies of Italy—he praised their grace, their noble yet gentle manners; of the ladies of France—he commended their sprightliness and freedom from affectation; of the German ladies—he told of their good sense and matronly habits, of their prudence and homely virtues. Had I talked of the Esquimaux, he would have found something to approve; and yet—*he approved not me*. It was evident that he debated, within his own mind, whether my jewels or myself deserved the most admiration—his eye glanced coldly over both; and he spoke, notwithstanding the festivity, in a voice which fell sadly, yet sweetly, on my ear.

"I thought the halls and the company less and less brilliant as the evening advanced; heaviness came over all—the lights seemed dim unto mine eyes—the music tuneless to my ears. I sought, eagerly and earnestly, for his approbation, but he gave it not. I went dispirited to my chamber; and, as my maids unclasped the coronet from my brows, I remembered a text of Scripture: it was—

" 'All is vanity and vexation of spirit.'

"How often since have I proved its truth! Days and weeks passed, and Edward remained our guest, often annoying the heiress of Montague by claiming her respect—a troublesome feeling to one who demanded homage from all the world. I was seated one morning in the embrasure of one of the library windows, when Edward, accompanied by his favourite friend, Sir Frederick Monson, entered, deeply engaged in conversation. The first sentence nailed me to my seat—I had no power either to move or speak. It was the voice of Sir Frederick.

" 'I only wish Lady Elizabeth paid me half the attention she does you—I should need no further encouragement.'

"How the blood mounted to my cheeks! my temples throbbed intensely; and I fancied they must have heard the beating of my heart.

" 'You are wrong, Sir Frederick,' replied my cousin, 'you are very wrong; the Lady Elizabeth regards herself too much to think of any other human being, either in the way of affection.'

or admiration. Charitable she is, from her love of patronage beauty she possesses in a dangerous degree; wit, and much nobleness of soul, are hers; but all—all overgrown by the rankest pride that ever had root in woman's heart!

“‘The greater, then, your triumph, fair gentleman, who have conquered it.’

“‘I deny that I have done so; I disbelieve the possibility of such a triumph: but, even if it were the case, could any free-born man submit to her caprices? No, no!—for a gentle, a true, woman, I could live and die; and, were Elizabeth poor, and a trifle humble, with that elevated soul, that exquisite beauty, and my own small but independent fortune, I would then act—with a difference. Marry, she may—an emperor, if she can get him—but there is no room in her heart for love. Why, every day, she sits at dinner a moving mass of jewels.’

“‘That day I made my appearance with a white rose only in my hair, and Edward complimented me for the first time. I resolved to attempt a conquest, simply because I thought myself scorned, and was determined to be victorious. I discovered, ere many weeks, that I had absolutely riveted chains around my own heart, instead of enchaining another. Bitter was my anguish; my proud heart felt crushed within me. If I could have discovered that he regarded me with the least affection, I should have been satisfied; but thus to be won unsought!—it was a dagger planted—rankling—festering—in my bosom. Bitterly did I weep over what I considered a degradation; when the sudden and unanticipated death of my beloved parent brought to light, that I had both a friend and lover in my cousin Edward.... Enough of this. We were married when two years of mourning for my father had expired. Married!—what an infinity of meaning is comprised in these three little syllables—what a quantity of hope and fear, of happiness or misery, do they imply! My husband was a Montague, so that the honours of our house remained fresh as ever; he was one, too, who rather increased than diminished the very quality he so earnestly condemned; for I was more proud of Edward Montague, than of either my riches or my ancestry. I felt myself elevated, indeed, in the scale of moral existence, when honoured by his love; and well I might, for a more noble, a more glorious creature never lived: he dwelt upon the earth without being contaminated by its baseness; his mind was a treasure-house, filled with all that was admirable in ancient or modern times; and his knowledge was blended with a taste so refined, yet so true, that it consecrated whatever it arranged. Nor was this all: his temper was of so gentle a nature, that the

lamb might lick his hand, and ringdoves nestle in his bosom; yet, being justly angered, he carried himself with such veritable bravery, that his enemies (if, indeed, he had any) would quail beneath the lightning of his deep blue eye. With what a holy, yet decided, spirit would he reprove my faults, teaching me humility by his own example, and the wisdom of holiness by his own life! Obedience to him was no task: I looked—and looked—and loved; *loved*!—that is too cold a phrase—may God forgive me for it—I worshipped!—worshipped my husband as devoutly as ever I worshipped my Creator! Hitherto, happiness had fenced me in on every side; the little I had suffered rendered my blessings all the brighter, and still my joyfulness increased—for I became a mother!

“Poets have written, and may write—write on for ever—but they never can portray, never convey even an idea, to those who have not experienced them, what a mother’s feelings are at the first faint cry of her first-born child! the creature of her love—the cause of her late agony—breathes—lives; the infant’s feeble wail is as the trumpet of hope sounding to her heart, of days—months—ages of happiness. She looks on the faint tracery of its features, and discovers a beauty seen by no other eye; she trembles, lest her embrace of love should injure its delicate limbs; she places it on her husband’s bosom, and, if she never prayed before, she prays then; what she prays, she hardly knows, but the ALMIGHTY hears, and notes her petition; and my belief is, that, if fitting, it is always granted at such an hour. O that a woman’s prayer was ever—‘Lord, this babe is thine! do thou what is best and meetest for it!’ Such is the prayer of the humble and believing Christian—such was my husband’s prayer—but such, I fear me, was not mine.

“Our boy grew; and another child came—a little delicate girl, who was enveloped in cotton, and sheltered even from the summer air;—but she, too, lived, and danced after butterflies on our shaven lawn, and was a sweet, soft, silent thing; yet, when she tossed her yellow hair from off her small and lovely features, it was as if a gleam of sunshine sparkled, then flitted from your sight. A proud woman exults in her sons, but a tender father loveth best the imploring weakness of a delicate girl. She is a renewal of the poetry of his youth—a sort of living dream—shadowy and trembling like a moonbeam—which he may wake and lose in a brief moment;—and, my Olympia was lost! In the morning, she had played at our feet with her brother—she had chased the shadows over the green turf—she had watched the bee collecting honey for its cell, and

had strewed the sweetest flowers in its path, that, as she said, 'it might not work so hard'—she had done all this, and her father noted, that her voice sounded more of joy, in its quiet laughter, than it had ever done before. That night *his* beloved, his cherished one, was a cold corpse—she sickened and died within a few short hours. My husband sat with her on his knees in tearless agony—for me, I wept. You see me stern, severe, and cold—*sorrow has hung its icicles on my heart*. Ay, despite our golden pageantry, grim Death *will* come—'tis a sad truth for those who live on gold: and, even now, I love not much to think of it—and why? There is *another* text which I remember—

“‘It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.’

“If God had taken all my purpled state, I think I could have borne it; my heart *might* have rebelled, but my lips would not have murmured—would not, as they have done, have disturbed the night from its allegiance to repose. Great was my pride, and great has been my penalty. Yet, still, I ask—”

Here a considerable quantity of the manuscript was effaced; and, if I noted right, the paper was blistered by tears. What would she have asked? I longed—but dreaded to enquire. I fear me 't was not mercy; for, though she had quailed, she had not sunk, before sorrow; and her lofty carriage, her proud, yet generous conduct, and, above all, the quick rich glance of her eagle eye, recorded a spirit glorying in earthly dominion. With how blind a zeal do we carve out our own misery, magnifying, by a singular and pernicious effort of human skill, the trials of a sensitive imagination into the real miseries of life! The trials and troubles of this golden lady were not, however, *imaginary—they were real*.

I continued.

“For some time previous to the loss of my little girl, I had observed, with breathless anxiety, a sort of morbid, dreamy habit, in which my husband seemed often to indulge. It was too restless to be called melancholy—too intense to be disturbed without considerable care. I have sat for hours together, watching his eyes fixed on vacancy, and his lips moving occasionally in abstracted motion: at such times, I have recalled his attention by singing, at first in a low tone, snatches of his favorite songs; sometimes a sentiment appeared to rivet his attention,—at another period it was the melody that re-

called his wandering thoughts. I would often enquire what he had been thinking of; but he invariably parried my question, and atoned for his inattention by redoubled vivacity—a vivacity which I well knew was foreign to his nature. My blessed husband! Years and years have passed; many of unutterable happiness, a greater number of intense misery—misery which the shining of my jewelled state increased a thousand-fold; for obscurity would have softened and concealed my sorrow, but the glare and the glitter of situation held it up, as a light set upon a hill, to illumine the humble as to the wretchedness of rank. Years have, indeed, passed; and my hair is gray, my step feeble, my eyes have melted their lustre into tears; and I am an aged woman, tottering on the brink of my ancestors' vaulted graves! Yet, Edward, thou art with me still! In the deep hours of midnight I listen to thy counsel; thy shadow comes before me in all the beauty of feeling and expression; the reproofs so wisely timed that, even to my proud ears, they sounded more like praise than censure; the gentle firmness, blending the husband and the friend in one; the quiet eye—I see it now as when in life—so still, and yet so dignified! Never does a proud thought grow into action, or a scornful word rise to my lip, that *his eye* comes not upon me; and its behest is done—for the action is repented of—the word suppressed!

“Have mercy, Heaven! those are the remembrances of my earlier days; but there are others of far different import. I remember, after Olympia's death, how His abstraction increased, until—but the records, the public papers, those chartered chroniclers of whatever chances of evil—*they* told the news!—they surmised upon it—the court chattered of it—the members of the house that had often rung with acclamations, as his fine voice, rolling like a flood of light, dispersed the mists from their mind, and sent conviction to their stubborn hearts—the very members of *that* house had learned to prate of him as ‘*poor Edward Montague!*’ I could not understand how it was—but the Almighty had taken the soul before the body was yielded to corruption.

“He knew me not—*my husband looked into my face and did not know me*—he did not know his own child! I could have borne the revilings, the wildness, of a madman; but the helpless, hopeless—Alas! alas! that ever I was born!

* * * * *

“My son—I lived for him! Time was gaining upon him, as upon us all; but as yet he had the advantage of the destroyer—he distanced him in the race, for his intellects were far beyond his age: his beauty!—but it was enough for me that he

was like his father; he was in every respect,—in almost every respect all that I could desire; and, with all the devotedness of a mother, I looked forward to what he would be hereafter; the staff of a noble house, the observed of all observers. I did perpetual violence to my own feelings, by endeavouring to nip every bud that promised a blossom of pride; for though my husband had restrained the haughtiness of my nature, and though, Heaven knows, he was himself a living illustration of what may chance to the best and greatest, yet I cannot *now* deceive myself into the belief that restraint is conquest; and my poor boy inherited, to the full, his mother's PRIDE! His temper was violent in the extreme; and, with his father's affliction ever before mine eyes, I yielded to, rather than opposed, his paroxysms of rage. I dreaded lest I might, by contradiction, bring forward some dormant malady that would, a second time, destroy my hopes of every thing like happiness. Time! that bane and blessing of existence—that purveyor of good and evil, softened much of the agony I at first endured; it taught me patience. My husband never left his own dwelling; a separate wing of Montague House was appropriated to his sole use; and, though he did not know me, he was evidently pleased and comforted by my attentions. His wanderings!—I will not stamp upon this silent paper: the wanderings of a maniac should be as sacred a deposit with a wife *as her husband's faults; a woman forgets what is due to herself when she condescends to that refuge of weakness—a confidant*: a wife's bosom should be the tomb of her husband's failings, and his character far more valuable, in her estimation, than his life. If this be not the case, she pollutes her marriage vow.

I have said that time softened my sorrow—it did more—it created new hopes. At Harrow, my son carried all before him—his abilities were acknowledged by masters and pupils; but, with all my partiality, I saw that his temper, instead of being improved, had acquired strength by frequent victory.

“The heir of forty thousand a year is seldom kept in order at a public school, except by a lad who has fifty in prospective.

“I learned that my son had constantly conquered; that he had been first of the first; that, in mind, he was without a competitor, and that he had distanced all his compeers in manly and athletic exercises. Previous to his going to Oxford, it was determined that he should spend some months at home; the truth was, I feared that his health might suffer from continued application, and I wished also to scan more distinctly into his character.

“My fears were soon aroused, and my perceptions quickened.

“Of his classical attainments I was no competent judge; but, certainly, extreme quickness often, too often, I thought, superseded the necessity for study. He wrote verses with great facility; but I saw, with feelings which cannot be described, that his models were the most licentious of our English poets. Of his taste for what he termed ‘old English sports,’ he gave sufficient proof, by living more in the tenniscourt and stables than in the library or drawing-room. He heard me reprove and reason, reason and reprove, with tolerable patience; but, when I kept him longer than he deemed necessary, there grew a wild impatience in his eye that made me shudder and be silent.

“‘Ralph!’ I heard him say, one evening, to his favourite companion, after I had endeavoured to convince him of the necessity for closer study, and extorted something like a promise of obedience to my request, ‘Ralph, do you know how I silence Lady Elizabeth? I tip her the madman’s eye—so—and she turns quite pale!’

“Merciful heavens! was it possible that my son could jest at his father’s infirmity—could make sport of his mother’s feelings! I knew not what to do or what to say. Was this indeed my son—my first-born—my only one—him on whom I had poured out the first torrent of maternal affection—the being of my dreams—the son of him who was all benevolence and honourable deeds, who abhorred deceit, and scorned all things unworthy! Alfred’s extravagance and utter heedlessness I little thought of, for I entertained the opinion, that they are the strongest and noblest trees which require the most pruning—but the expedient, to rid himself of my reproofs by such a means!—When, in the twilight of that same evening, I sat gazing from hour to hour upon my poor senseless husband, who, silently and with folded arms, paced up and down the long verandah, which I had built to enable him to exercise in all weathers; when I marked his eye, still exquisite in form, but mantled by the dread disease, shorn of its beams, yet looking towards the heavens, and pointing with childish glee to the stars as, one by one, they left their mysterious caverns and paced the paths allotted to them by the great Architect of all immensity; when, I say, I looked at that human wreck, I trembled—I shuddered to think upon the frail bark about to launch on the multitudinous ocean of public life. My husband had been struck by Heaven; but my son!—I dreaded he would fall by earthly means—become contaminated by the low and

base, the prey of designing sharpers and knaves. Feeling, I was but too well convinced, he lacked; and I doubted his principles—I feared their stability; I dreaded that those born of noble parents were subject to the self-same vices as those in less exalted spheres; and, thoroughly alive to the belief that the disgrace of the child is the completion of a parent's misery, no matter what her former trials may have been, I prayed, while drops of agony burst upon my brow, that I might be spared the dreadful results that would arise if my son should be unworthy of his name. I brooded in silence over the disappointment which I already felt; I mixed still less in society, and restrained my son, perhaps too much, from the sports and company of youths of his own age:—perhaps, had I yielded on minor points, and indulged him in trifles, he might not have run so restive in matters of greater consequence. I was mortified that a Montague should require the same pastime as a Jones or a Jackson; I thought of the proud days of my own youth, and, soured rather than humbled by the trials I had experienced, I made but small allowance for the difference between a girl and boy, and, I fear me, too little for the deteriorating influence of the times. The people now-a-days look upon nobility as a thing to be talked with—used and abused—as if it were of themselves; and though my son's pride effectually prevented him from entering into this belief, it was of the spurious kind that too frequently mistakes insolence for dignity; so that I was often as much shocked at his assumption of greatness, where it was uncalled for, as at his want of it where it was necessary to his state.

“He went to Oxford; and I was richly complimented on my son's beauty, wit, and talent. I was told that he excelled in the qualifications so necessary for a true gentleman; and I resolved to supply him liberally with money, and such advice as I could offer. The knowledge of his faults was locked within my own bosom; and the world—*our* world—were loud in their applause, Mothers, rich and titled ones, told me that they *envied* my happiness in having such a son. In the masquerade of life, how little we know what we do envy.

“It was a quiet still evening, and I had retired to my chamber, after being as usual with my husband, until the hour when he went to rest. In two months more my son would be of age; and I looked forward to the time with an anxiety in which none but mothers can sympathize. I knew that he had cultivated his oratorical talents with more than usual care; and,

despite his faults, it was impossible to look upon his youthful demeanour without feelings of admiration. My thoughts passed rapidly over my former years; and, though I dreamed not of happiness, I dreamed of triumph. Again I triumphed in my son,—but my dream was disturbed at its commencement,—for Alfred, flushed with wine, and under strong excitement, rushed, unannounced, into my chamber.

“ ‘Mother!’ he exclaimed; ‘mother, I must have money. Money, and instantly, for here I cannot stay!’ I looked on him, overcome by terror and anxiety, while he reiterated his demand for money.

“ ‘Why,—why need I dwell upon it? I discovered he had gambled. Again and again had he indulged in this dreadful propensity. The sums—the enormous sums—forwarded to Oxford for his authorized wants and desires, had been squandered away in profligate company. And then he came before me, reiterating his demand for money. He had been publicly arrested by a tradesman; and not only that, but scorned and scouted by his oldest companions for — — —; but he deserved it all—all—not only for his want of conduct, but his want of candour. He placed no confidence in me,—me—his mother, who would have died to secure his honour; and now I was indebted to circumstances, not to himself, for the disclosure of his disgrace—disgrace!—black and bitter disgrace! But he did not feel it—that was but too evident.—He talked of his coming of age putting an end to his difficulties—rendering every thing smooth—preventing his affairs spreading; and passed from purpose to purpose, from scheme to scheme, with a terrific rapidity. I saw that no time was to be lost. I found he had already been in the hands of money-lenders; and that even now he would have resorted to them, had it not been impossible for him to raise fresh funds without my consent. But I cared nothing for the paltry gold. Of what value was it to me? And though the sum necessary was tremendous, I would have increased it ten-fold, to prevent the possibility of the distress of a Montague gaining the public ear.

“ ‘The next morning the following paragraph met my eye in a conspicuous part of a fashionable journal:—

“ ‘ ‘We understand that a certain scion of a noble house has been coolly looked upon at Oxford, as not fulfilling his pecuniary engagements, and neglecting his debts of honour. We regret this, more particularly, as we know it is his intention to start for the County after his coming of age. And we would remind those who are most severe in their animadversions on the gentleman in question, that there *may be*,—we do not say

there *is*, we only say there *may be*,—a cause for his eccentricities, which we should deeply regret.’

“Here followed immediately, but apparently without connexion, another paragraph:—

“ ‘We hear the Hon. E. Montague continues in excellent *bodily* health: this, under existing circumstances, is hardly to be desired.’

“O! for the obscurity of Smiths, and Brownes, and Bungays! Who would have observed their ‘eccentricities,’ or cared for their ‘existing circumstances,’ or taken the pains to pen a paragraph to enlighten the world on their movements? But the vulgar love to hear and tell some new thing respecting the ‘nobility;’—they gape for, and swallow, all the falsehoods put forth as facts, of their frailties and their habits; and whoever invents most, is, consequently, the most popular.

“How my heart bled at this fresh wound, and the tearing open of the old and rankling sore! Merciful Heaven! how many wounds are inflicted on a proud heart, which the humble-minded can never understand!

“I wished—yet dreaded—that my son should see this reference to him. I afterwards learned that he had seen it, and laughed it to scorn.

“Whatever I might endure from repeated disappointments, I kept my feelings to myself. How have I prayed that my husband had been spared, to direct by his wisdom, and render virtue still more lovely by example! How have I regretted my poor buried girl! Alas! alas! I felt more deeply, every hour of my existence, the force of that text, which, like a knell, often rang mournfully on my heart—‘All is vanity and vexation of spirit,’ Yet I clung to it,—to the pomp, and pageantry, and state. I clung to it, proudly—earnestly; and, throwing aside my retired habits, I resolved to celebrate my son’s coming of age with festivities; not at Montague House, for I could not support the idea of mirth and music in those halls, where the poor maniac wandered! He, whose lamp *once* shone so brightly; it would have been an insult to his affliction to bring festivity within his dwelling. And yet it was necessary; no Montague, for centuries, had come of age unsung, uncelebrated. And the idea of such an event being unrecorded, would have confirmed all the reports circulated,—and circulated but too truly, to his disadvantage. Totally reckless of what was said or thought, for nearly a month previous he was busied in arranging a series of fêtes and amusements for his birth-day: and I endeavoured to enter into those plans, and to argue myself into the belief, that now he would see the error

of his ways, become careful of his society, and do as much credit to his name, by deeds of honour and charity, as his manners and personal beauty did to his descent.—It was a fallacious hope!

“At Alfred Park, another of our estates, were assembled the descendants of, as well as numbers of those, who, on a former occasion—then many years passed—assembled to celebrate my age of womanhood. Some I had not seen for years; and sufficient of woman’s vanity rested round my heart to make me feel a hope that I was not so changed—so very much changed—as many I observed around me.

“We are so apt to compare ourselves with what we were a month—a week ago, that time works its furrows without our heeding its progress.

“The dinner, and its attendant ball—a *bal masqué*,—passed off with much noise and ———; but I was not calculated to judge of its effects. My son spoke and acquitted himself so well, that while listening to the music of his voice—while contemplating the grace of his movements, the dignity of his address, and the purity, both in style and sentiment, of his eloquence—I forgot all—every thing—except that he was *my* son.

“Agreeably to a determination I had formed, of never sleeping from under the same roof that canopied, what I may too truly call my husband’s *remains*, I got into my carriage as the morning dawned; and, just as the horses were setting off, a letter was thrown in at the window, which—God help me!—I read by the light of the blessed sun, before he was half risen.

“At the very time when the veins on my forehead were swelled to intense torture by the perusal of that unfortunate paper, the *élite* of three counties were discussing—my jewels—my equipage—and my happiness! I laughed convulsively as this thought crossed my mind; for I saw the impression my son had made on all, by the grace and suavity of his manners. Even those (and they were not a few) who had come prepared to dislike him, went away convinced, that ‘report’ was a false liar, and that Alfred Montague was worthy of his name! I knew all this—and more. I knew that Alfred Montague was—what I dare not write—what I dare not, even now, though the grave has closed over my child; and though the fair hand that, urged both by destitution and despair, traced those faint lines to me, in her extreme necessity, is a crumbling skeleton in the consecrated ground, which my charity, not his justice, bestowed—I dare not, though they are all gone, think upon what I read that morning, while the beams of the rising sun pryed

through my crimson blinds! O, who would wish to be a mother, if they knew a mother's trials! But the worst was yet to come! I had to endure the laugh of contempt—the sneer—when I repeated to him the tale of distress created by his own depravity. I had to listen to the defence of a heartless libertine, and that libertine—my own son. I was forced, by my love of justice and of mercy, to visit the victim of his sin, to catch the last faint sighs of her departing breath, and to hear her pray—poor girl—that God would bless her destroyer, and save him from the wrath to come!

“Her devotion, her noble sentiments, her Christian fortitude her pure charity, her freedom from selfishness, rendered her, in my estimation—poor pale departing flower that she was—fit mate for any noble in the land. Deception visits not the couch of death; it is no place for a bland smile—no refuge for pride—no temple for extravagance; there is a stern reality in the silent chamber, a truth in the sobbing breath; the pall may be of silver or of serge, but death, the same death, is beneath both. My little girl departed in a quiet sleep, and woke in heaven. But this woman was in the blossom of her beauty and her youth; and, though the spirit may bend to the decrees of the Almighty, yet the flesh will battle with the destroying angel—will struggle in his grasp. I witnessed her convulsions and her death! It was a small, a wretched room, and she was nearly starved; and I saw *his* last letter; it lay *upon* her heart; and, cruel as it was, she kissed it, ere she died. And in it he advised——! Now may the Lord forgive him, for it was a foul insult to the faithful dove, who had left her parents' home, and braved the world, for him!

“The church clock of the neighbouring village struck nine. At this same hour, the previous night, I had been entranced by his eloquence. I had argued myself into the belief that his faults were venial; but before me lay the proof of cool and deliberate vice. She had suffered and sacrificed for him her good name; and yet he had, when tired of his victim, refused her even the means of existence. He did not think I would have sought her out; he thought me all too proud for such a course. He did not know his mother!

“I cut off a tress of the long black hair which swept round her like a shroud. I thought that *that* might move him. He was still my child, the child of my beloved husband; and if he did repent—if a single tear even stood in his eye—I could almost have forgiven him; for in him, my pride, my love, was but one feeling—he was my *only* child.

“I directed that every thing should be done in a fitting man-

ner for her burial : and I was descending the narrow stairs, when an aged man, travel-soiled and worn, stood at the door, and asked some questions of the woman of the house. They were soon answered; and the old man staggered so impetuously up the creaking stairs, that I was obliged to re-enter the chamber of death.

“He gazed for a moment upon the pale corse; and then, throwing from him his hat and staff, knelt by the side of the wretched bed, and buried his face in the streaming hair of what had been his child!

“Here was fresh agony for me! The father had become rigid and insensible, and it was nearly an hour before he recovered from a state of frightful torpor. He seemed ashamed of the emotion he had betrayed. His features, though venerable, were stern and harsh, his brow wrinkled, groans and tears struggled within his bosom, yet he would not let them forth. He looked at me—I almost thought suspiciously,—but when the woman of the cottage named my name, (for I was too near my own neighbourhood to be concealed,) the miserable parent burst forth into a torrent of reproaches upon mine, and me. He told me of my pride. He declared that on the only interview he had ever obtained with my son, after his daughter’s destruction, he had said that it was his mother’s pride alone that prevented his marrying ‘Mary.’ The afflicted man spoke in a harsh, suppressed, grating voice, grinding out his words, and then bursting forth his anger like a torrent over a rugged rock. I could not contradict the opinion he had formed of Alfred. I could only for myself say, that I knew nought of the attachment.

“He knelt again; but it was to pronounce a curse—the curse of a desolate parent upon my wretched son. I was not too proud to supplicate—to implore him to restrain his imprecations. ‘I will not commit murder,’ he said; ‘but I call to God for vengeance on the head of the destroyer. The law of man cannot attach his crime, but God can, and will, punish!’

“I trembled violently while he continued; the cold dew stood like hail upon my brow,—my blood curdled and crept slowly through my distended veins,—my tongue clave to my lips, as the curse of the desolate father mounted to the THRONE of the Almighty. Again I supplicated. I was mad enough to offer gold to quell a parent’s grief! ‘And you, that are a mother, think gold can yield consolation to one bereaved like me!—to one, whose only child lies there! O, Mary, Mary, why did you not return! I would not have chided. We would have prayed together as we used. We would have mingled tears at

the foot-stool of the Lord, and I should once more have heard you murmur, Father! But now, Mary, my child, you are dead, and I am desolate! A burst of natural grief succeeded, and I entered my splendid equipage with a bursting heart. O, misery unspeakable! I knew that old man's curse was registered in heaven, for it was deserved!

“As I entered the hall, I encountered a deputation, at that unseasonable hour, consisting of some of the principal persons in the county, who had come to announce to my son the sudden death of one of the members of the shire, and to request that he would immediately solicit the suffrages of the electors.

“I thought I should have sunk into the earth while receiving the compliments of those men. I crept to my chamber like a guilty thing; and, dismissing my attendants, desired my son's presence. I told him what I had witnessed. I dared not trust myself with reproaches, for, if I had, they would have known no bounds. He listened to my tale without emotion. I drew forth the silken braid of her beautiful hair. He grew pale—his lip quivered—his eyes filled with tears. Thank God! he was not entirely lost; for, though he expressed nothing, he was moved. Even as a drowning man grapples at a floating straw, so will a mother seize any indication of mere humanity in a profligate child, as a symbol of returning virtue.

“A few days after this, my dear, my venerated husband, was, by an easy and painless transition, wafted to eternity. He regained his senses nearly two hours before his death. He called for me; yet, when I came, at first he knew me not. He had not traced the gradual changes in my face, and now they took him by surprise. Soon he was all himself;—spoke of his illness—of Olympia's death, as things of recent date. But what was most strange, never enquired for his son. This, in one respect, was happy, for he was absent, canvassing the county, soliciting the ‘most sweet voices’ of high and low, and leading the innocents of those days to believe that he was a miracle of patriotism and virtue. But this assumption did not pass with me, both my maternal love and my maternal pride had been blasted: and the curse, the fearful curse, still rang upon my ear.

“He behaved with tolerable decency on his father's death, which opened afresh the wounds I had received when first reason departed from him: I had often thought that I could have better supported his death than his intellectual prostration: but I was mistaken. The adage, ‘While there is life, there is hope,’ was most true in my case. While he was be-

fore me, I hoped, in the very jaws of despair : but the vault was now closed, and hope had indeed departed !

“ My son was elected without opposition ; and though there were many rumours afloat to his disadvantage, still, patronage and popularity—and above all, gold, worked their way. There was seldom more rioting, or more excess, committed in the neighbouring town, than on the day when he was declared representative of the county.

“ I was sick at heart, and happy that my husband's recent death afforded sufficient reason for my remaining in strict seclusion. One of the windows of my chamber overlooked the park gates, and as the shouts of the half-drunken electors came madly on the air, I glanced for an instant over the scene—it was no delusion—there stood ‘ Mary's’ father, leaning, like Jacob of old, on the ‘ top of his staff,’ his eye fixed upon my window, while a smile of scorn and contempt curved his chiselled lip, and lighted his hollow eye with an expression most hard to bear. I was rivetted to the spot. Some fools among the crowd espied me, and called for ‘ three cheers for the Noble Lady Elizabeth.’ How I hated popularity ! I hastened from the window, but yet continued long enough to see the old man lift his hat, in mockery, from his head, while his hair streamed in the wind like the pennon of a phantom ship.

* * * * *

“ I remained too proud (my foes would say) to permit the world to know that any difference existed between my son and myself. He had now entered fully upon his political career ; and though the party his ancestors, for a series of years, had invariably supported, were then out of power, still his eloquence commanded attention, and his steadiness to his friends, respect.

“ The dignity of political consistency was then appreciated as it ought to be. Men—or *things* called men—were not whirled about by every blast of interest or wind of doctrine, to serve or bow to the mania of ill-grounded opinion. It was something to be a statesman in those days.—I will not say what it is now ; because political discussions are opposed to both the delicacy and dignity of a well-born woman. Enough for her that she venerates the Church and honours the King. This will sufficiently exercise her love and faith—a woman's best and dearest qualities. At least, I argued with myself, the world knows

nought of what so rankles in my heart, and even if it did——

“ Alfred Montague was dressed after—courted—flattered—worshipped. How little is the world acquainted with its idols—how little do we know what we admire! We imagine a deity—clothe it with our fancy—then fix upon some living temple for our creation to inhabit, and call it ‘perfection.’ Yet was I not insensible to the homage paid to my son. Next to deserving, there is nothing so sweet as receiving, praise; though I knew his moral hollowness, I clung to the belief that he was politically honest. And were it not for that old man’s curse, I would have hoped—ay, hoped for him for ever. What a blessed thing it is for humanity, that hope, like the fabled Phoenix, springs anew from its own ashes!

“ I was one morning startled by the intelligence that Lord L—— wished to see me immediately. I well knew this sudden visit boded no good. He thought my son was at Montague House. He was told so by his servants in town. Three nights he had been absent from the House when questions interesting to his constituents were debated. He was looked for every where, and certain rumours had aroused Lord L——; who, from an old friendship subsisting between our families, as well as from other motives, watched my son’s career with as much anxiety as if he had been his own. He came to me to enquire if he were wavering. I said I would stake my life on his integrity. He shook his head.

“ I ordered my carriage, resolved to find my son, and know the truth at once. Had the party his father and all his family so long supported been in power, I could have forgiven his defalcation, but to desert their cause when his support was needed! Memory whispered that he *had* deserted a once dear object, when most she wanted his assistance. Ay, but his political honour, his fame, the disgrace!

“ I arrived at four o’clock at Alfred Park. I learned there that my son had only left about an hour for town. Was any one with him? Yes; it was one of the leading members of the administration.

“ My brain burned. I ordered fresh horses—post horses; and, without alighting, proceeded to London. It was night as we drove past Hyde Park Corner, and the rain pattered heavily against the carriage windows, the ponderous knocker echoed through the aristocratic silence of St. James’s-square.

“ ‘ Mr. Montague had just gone down to the house. He had not set off three minutes.’

“ ‘ Was any one with him?’

“ ‘ Yes, the same cabinet minister who had been with him at Alfred Park!’

“ I drove to the House of Commons, and was informed by the usher, that Mr. Montague had not arrived, but that he doubtless soon would, as a very important motion was to be brought on by the opposition.

“ While I was yet speaking, Alfred would have passed. I believe he did not know me. He *said* he did not. I went with him into one of the anterooms, and at once charged him with dishonour and desertion. He endeavoured to avoid reply, and stammered forth something about change of times and prejudices, and all the jargon of those who find it convenient to desert their friends in their necessities. I argued, I entreated, I endeavoured to arouse his pride. I spoke to him of his father, of his family.—I implored his attention. I pictured his falsehood, the scorn of his partizans, the contempt of his new friends. I talked of the virtues of those of ancient days, who died to uphold the welfare of their country. I reminded him of the time when he used to sit upon my knee, and read of the heroes of old, whose religion was patriotism. I wept—positively wept—burning, scalding tears, into his bosom. And he promised—swore by all that was sacred in heaven and earth, that he would not swerve from his old party.

“ I met Lord L——, and told him of my triumph. Nor was this all. I determined to ascend to the ventilator, and there exult in the disappointment of that ‘ dog in office,’ who had tempted him to disgrace. There were a good many ladies in that elevated pest-room, but they made way for me, and I was stationed on the self-same spot, where, many years before, I had often listened to the sound—I may truly call it ‘ music,’—of his father’s voice. I know not who spoke, nor what was said. I only know how fatally I distinguished one person—one event.

“ My son entered, in a state of intoxication, with his new ‘ leader;’ took a seat behind the treasury bench; and, not satisfied with silent disgrace, spoke, ay, spoke (would that he had been born dumb!) against the principles of his ancestors. He spoke as well as he could speak under such circumstances, for his desertion and his intoxication were evident to the whole house. Groans from one side, and a species of half-applause from his new friends, were his reward—the only reward he obtained; for, before the ratification of the appointment he was to receive as the recompense of his apostacy, his party went out of power, and Lord L——, our old and valued friend, was appointed premier.

“ ‘ I regret, dear Lady Elizabeth,’ said this excellent man to me, ‘ that I cannot do as I would desire for your son.’

“ ‘ Sir,’ I replied, ‘ the man who is *once* untrue to his party, should never again be trusted. I desire none of my country’s privileges for the unworthy scion of our once noble house.’

“ As I am a born and living lady, I felt ashamed to return to Montague House. What could I say to the electors? How could I look, or speak, or act? Was I not an apostate’s mother? Was not the finger of scorn every where pointed, at ‘ Montague, the fool and the betrayer?’ Was not the county in an uproar? Was he not obliged to accept the ‘ Chiltern Hundreds?’ Did not the papers surfeit with lampoons, and the print-shops with caricatures? And were there not many, *friends* they called themselves, who dared to send me those symbols of his disgrace, expressing their concern—their *pity* even—at ‘ what had occurred.’

“ In the midst of all these realities, would come the remembrance of that poor, pale, skeleton girl; and her father’s curse, ringing in mine ears. And then, because of his unpopularity, the ‘ Oxford business’ became the subject of country animadversion;—and—I went to Italy.

“ Let no one desire children. Let no one wish to have the quiver filled with those living arrows. I shall die childless—as a punishment for my pride. If great was my sin, great has been my tribulation.

“ My son, too, went abroad, to blot out the memory of past offences by the committal of fresh faults:—and one night, at Naples, he was borne into my palazzo, killed, like a dog, in the streets, by some villain’s stiletto, in a drunken brawl—the last of his line:—a creature of talent, of beauty, of extraordinary powers, yet wanting in those requisites which, I have observed, are often granted to those of much commoner capacity.

“ It was night, and I heard the sound of many voices in the dissonant tones of drunkenness beneath my palace windows—and *his* voice among the rest—and a scuffle, and then all was still. Suddenly, a rush of men, a glare of lights, and my poor, erring, sinful son, lay on the marble floor, the red blood oozing to my feet; and I kissed his lips, his brow, his cheek—for, Oh, was he not my child!

“ For several days I knew not what they did to him or me; but one night I heard a noise of nails and screws—and then it ceased—and the knowledge of the dread reality was with me. And when they slept, I stole into his chamber—the attendants *there* slept also—and the coffin was fastened down, covered with black velvet, decked with the solemn magnificence of woe.

I knew that there he was at rest.—REST!—did I say rest! God grant it! How blessed is repose after this world's turmoil!

“Now Heaven shield me from superstition! After I had remained awhile over that dismal sight, a thin and vapoury cloud arose at the coffin's foot; gray it was, as a mountain mist, and clear, for I saw the tapers burning through it, and the sleeping watchers in their repose. But there it stayed, gradually moulded by some unseen power, into the semblance of a human being, undefined, and yet distinct; it was a fearful creation, towering to the vaulted roof—a bloodless, colourless, thing—fading, yet remaining, to my sight. And—Almighty Powers!—ere it vanished, it assumed the form, the movements, of poor Mary's father!

“This was no dream. Alas! I was but too awake to misery!”

Here was another break in this “tale of woman's trials,” and I was thankful for it; for I had read enough of her misfortunes—many of which would not, perhaps, have happened to one less proud. I knew the rest; for I had often heard, that on her return from Italy, it was feared that her reason had been impaired by the apostacy and death of her son.

As it was, she was a beneficent and glorious relic of the olden time, and a living proof, that no situation, however exalted, can shield us from the ills and turmoils of this state of existence, in which we are doomed to work our pilgrimage to another and a different world, where “sorrow and sighing shall be no more.”

Not long since the remains of the proud, but Right Noble Lady Elizabeth Montague were placed within the marble vault by her husband's side, and many tears were shed at her departure. *She* was, indeed, the last of a noble race. And the property, once so ample, has been divided, and the house is to be sold, the statues and the pictures, and the books—all come to the vulgar hammer!

I had almost forgotten to say, that with her were interred two miniatures, one in each hand, each so like the other, that it was only the fact of one wearing powder, that could distinguish them;—the powdered one, she directed, should be placed in her right hand, and the arm bent, so that the hand might rest upon her heart. The other was simply laid beneath the withered palm.

THE VISIONARY.

The Trials of Delphine Barrington.

“BUT her early trials were purely imaginary. All her life she was possessed of wealth, and rank, and reputation; that is, reputation of a certain class—the reputation of beauty and cleverness, *and all that sort of thing.*”

“What do you mean by ‘all that sort of thing,’ Myra?” enquired Lady Constance of her niece, who had made the observation.

“Why, you know—all that sort of thing—beauty and cleverness,—you know what I mean, dear aunt?”

“I know, at least I imagine I know, what beauty is, and I can appreciate cleverness—but as to ‘all that sort of thing!’ it is one of those undefined expressions which are perpetually waging war with common sense and correct language. People get hold of a string of words, and send them forth, on the same principle that a tail is appended to a paper kite—as small ballast to a weak judgment.”

“My dear aunt!”

“My Myra—I do not mean to hurt you in any way; but I confess myself sick and ashamed at the miserable paucity of ideas and expressions continually manifest in what is termed polite conversation. I would not have you a chatter-box, but I think—perhaps my opinion is old fashioned—but I do think the aim and object of conversation is to be understood.”

Young Myra pouted a little; but she was too deeply interested in the subject not to draw her aunt’s attention again to Delphine, whose life and trials had been much talked of in what she called “the world;” but which, in fact, was nothing more than the coterie of which she was an unit.

“I am sure,” she persisted, “I have heard you say, a thousand times, that Delphine’s trials were purely imaginary.”

“You have heard me say they originated in imagination; she wound up her mind to a particular pitch, and whatever did not harmonize with it, her sensibility magnified into a misery; but you must remember that, although the greater number of her trials arose from this source, they were afterwards converted into real misfortunes; the less likely to be relieved, because their origin was within her own bosom. The fact is, Delphine began life upon a wrong principle. She desired to measure all with whom she came in contact by her own standard of excellence. She was not content to take the world as

it is, but she wished to arrange people and things according to her own notions of fitness; she had a sublime and exquisite idea of perfection; her tastes were pure and refined, and her susceptibilities strong. If she had been less the spoiled child of fortune she might have become tractable; but a woman who, at nineteen, finds herself mistress of five thousand a year, and has learned its value in her nursery, is hardly under the dominion of reason. Delphine never affected sentiment—but she felt it. Her brilliant imagination was perpetually at work; a phrenologist would have said, that she should have been continually brought into contact with facts—that so the influence of fiction might be diminished; but, sooth to say, five thousand a year procures to the possessor numberless arguments in favour of whatever theory the said possessor wishes to establish. And Delphine's acquaintances were more inclined to flatter her wild extravagances than to correct them."

"Would she have thanked them for their advice?" enquired Myra.

"Probably not, in the first instance: but true friendship works without such recompense; and Delphine was too affectionate not to be grateful, when once assured it was her benefit that was sought. The whole train of her miseries arose out of *an uncontrolled imagination*."

"You think, then," said Myra, gravely, "that her faults or crimes arose from that cause, not from a predilection for vice?"

"I do. I believe that crime in woman, in nine cases out of ten, originates in the faults and circumstances arising from an ill-directed, or, at best, an unsubdued imagination. Facts are what women are seldom acquainted with; so that they reason from false conclusions. Society, particularly of gone-by days, has much to answer for: the weaknesses of women have been cherished; they have been educated on principles equally irrational and unphilosophic; and yet greater strength, greater forbearance, is expected from them than men are ever called upon to practise. The knowledge of this truth has taught me mercy; and I never perceive the full tide of public opinion running against a woman without questioning its justice, and feeling inclined to alter its course, and turn it against men, who are a thousand times as bad, and yet are received as if they were *sans reproche*."

"Shall we revolt?" enquired Myra, laughing; "and, taking society into our own hands, change the current of affairs?"

"I believe," replied Lady Constance, "that, even in this age of change, what may be termed a 'revolt' would be per-

fectly useless ; but society is much more in our own hands than men would care to confess ; we could do a great deal if we went properly to work. Most females endeavour to rule by a species of petty intrigue, and accomplish great ends by little means ; this must render them contemptible even to those over whom they triumph. Whereas—”

“I know what you are going to say,” interrupted the lively Myra. “You are going to say, that women should rule by the power of gentleness, if that is not inexplicable, and should show by practice what their precepts are. But never mind that now, dear aunt. You knew Delphine when she was young, before a breath had been breathed against her reputation ; and you know, and even visit her, now that she is old.”

“Ay ! my child !” replied Lady Constance ; “I do—I do visit her, because I feel for her, and because she has not ceased to feel for herself. I have gathered many pearls from her lips. And in her old age, happily for herself, she has seen her folly.”

“When it is too late !” sighed Myra.

“Too late,” replied Lady Constance, “for this world’s happiness ; but you remember, I hope, it is not for this world alone we live.”

“Her experience, my dear aunt, must be worth hearing.”

“It is ; but the ear of youth is more hardened against the voice of experience than the stone, which, it is known, can be indented by a perpetual drop. How wise we should be if, instead of seeking that same treasure for ourselves, we profited by the experience of others !”

“But Delphine—Delphine—aunt mine ; do let me hear all about Delphine !”

Lady Constance smiled, and took up her knitting, which her niece well knew was a certain indication that her wish would be immediately complied with. She was right. The old lady commenced :—

“I think, my dear, I have somewhere read, that the vulgar name of a great Italian poet was *Trapasso* ; but when the learned Gravina resolved to devote the youth to the muses, he gave him one of a more mellifluous sound, which has long been known and cherished—*Metastasio*. Suggestions produced by the influence of names are involuntary, but the illusion they produce is stronger than we are at all aware of. One would suppose that Mrs. Barrington wished her daughter to grow up under the dominion of Romance, for the sound of ‘Delphine’ was never heard in the manor of Barrington until bestowed upon the young heiress, who, according to the will of an old

doting grandmother, was to be of age at nineteen. Unfortunately for my poor friend, her father died while she was yet in infancy, and her vivid imagination was left to the culture of a mother, distinguished only by extreme weakness, and an inordinate share of vanity. Her childhood passed under the care of a governess, whose information was limited to what could be acquired from the perusal of a few French authors, of whom Rousseau was the most philosophic and the most profound; but who possessed so many accomplishments, and revelled in the appearance of so much sentiment, that Delphine loved and trusted her with all the love and all the trustfulness of her gentle and generous nature.

“Poor child! Much as she was petted and spoiled, there were times when she suffered, both from her mother’s weakness and the tyranny of her governess. The latter would sometimes punish her by solitary confinement in a turret room of the old manor-house: there she would sit; sometimes trembling at the wind, which howled amid the trees, or clattered the windows in their massive frames, but, more frequently, exerting those imaginative powers, which she possessed in an extraordinary degree, in the formation of tales and scenes of adventure, where the hero and heroine were beautiful, generous, with fine names, and, of course, unfortunate; while their enemies were ugly, mean, gifted with titles of frightful sound, and in power. You may smile, Myra; but a judicious parent would have brought such a child into contact with *facts*, would have destroyed her *Châteaux en Espagne*, not by apparent opposition, but by drawing her judgment into action, by making her acquainted with things.

“At seventeen, Delphine burst upon the fashionable London world, a miracle of beauty, a creature steeped to the very lips in romance, led away by excitement, and utterly unable to control her feelings, or to conceal them from society. Remember, that united to this temperament were generosity, affection, and, as I said before, the very highest ideas of perfection. She could make no allowance for little faults, and her conclusions were sweeping ones. In all matters of the imagination her knowledge might be called profound; but of the actual state of the world she knew less than a London boarding-school girl of thirteen. Her life might be termed a succession of smiles and tears. What would, to another, have been only a trifling inconvenience, was to her a source of real misery; and she was surrounded by many who encouraged these emotions, until an idea of suppressing them never entered into her thoughts.

“Her poor weak mother became terrified when she saw the flattering, fluttering tribe which beset the beautiful heiress. She fancied Delphine in danger, but she was in reality much safer than could have been supposed; she was protected by her delicacy—a delicacy as tender as the down on a butterfly’s wing, and which made her shrink from the thousand and one dangers that beset a modern girl of fashion. Good taste, with her, supplied, as it often does, the place of good principle; and, brought up as she had been, she would as soon, nay, sooner, have violated the one than the other. It so occurred, that among several who tendered heart and hand was a Sir Lionel Leister, and, strange as it may appear, his first success was the consequence of his musical name. Lionel! could any thing be more dulcet than the sound of Lionel? then Leister! he must have descended in some way or other from the house who flourished under the vain and wicked Elizabeth. His name did half the business. He was also handsome, well-bred, and generous. Older, to be sure, than herself by many years, but that only excited her veneration. She once heard him called *respectable*, that *was* a damper to heroics; but she got over it, when she discovered he had fought a duel, and swam twice across the Hellespont. ‘What a good husband he will make,’ said I to her one morning, when the marriage was arranged. ‘I hope not,’ she replied; ‘there is something so *tame* about a *good* husband.’ ‘His temper appears excellent.’ ‘Temper!’ she repeated, while a smile of disdain shot athwart her fine features—‘do you suppose I would for a moment think so meanly of a man as to consider his temper!’ ‘His estates are considerable!’ ‘Do you know, Constance,’ she replied, after a pause, ‘that is the chief thing which shadows my happiness. O that he were a beggar, the inhabitant of a cottage, that I might prove my love unto the world!’ At all events, you are secure of his principles, for he is truly religious.’ I saw it was, to use a most expressive phrase, ‘on the tip of her tongue,’ to reply, she did not like him the better for that; but Delphine had acquired an undefined sort of religious feeling, which bordered more on superstition than on that calm and holy affection for a merciful God, and an atoning Saviour, which Christians, properly so called, delight in. Yet that very superstition saved her from such an expression: her veneration was great—she respected whatever was distinguished in art, literature, or history; but respect, with her, savoured as much of romance as all her other passions—for every thing she adopted became a passion; with Delphine the past and the future were forgotten in the present. She married

Sir Lionel, and, at first, every thing was *couleur de rose*; her very imagination appeared to have nothing to desire—it was impossible to be more blessed! Every one congratulated her, and she congratulated herself. Her husband, at first, was all devotion, all obedience; her every wish was anticipated; their united fortunes were splendid, and when did not the touch of gold convert all things into bliss? Palaces and cottages sprang from the earth at her desire. She founded schools—clothed her *élèves* in silk, and enwreathed their dwellings with roses: the little dirty children tore their pretty frocks, and destroyed the flowers—Delphine was disgusted, and the schools fell into unpicturesque ruins. Delphine wept over the ingratitude of the whole human race, and declared that, henceforth, she would shut her heart against all descriptions of charity. You perceive that, in this, as well as in many other instances, the fault was in herself: if we sow pearls in a bed that would produce roses, and expect, by so doing, to reap a pearly harvest, we must, of necessity, be disappointed. If the seed sown is not suited to the soil, the husbandman laboureth in vain.”

“The land may be improved,” said Myra, following on the old lady’s train of fable.

“True, my dear; but that is the work of years, not months.

“Sir Lionel was a worthy, excellent man, yet he did not understand his wife: he was willing enough to subscribe to her fancies, but he could not enter into them. With the rapidity of lightning she passed from subject to subject, revelling in the exaggeration of sentiment, and accusing all of want of feeling who were not as fastidious as herself. A little dialogue, which I once heard between her and her husband, will illustrate her errors during the third year of her marriage.

“‘Delphine,’ said Sir Lionel, ‘sing to us the *réveillé*.’

“‘The *réveillé*,’ she repeated, while moving towards her harp; ‘I cannot believe you have any feeling but dislike to that beautiful air. Why, you fell asleep the last time I sang it you!’

“‘I was dreadfully tired, my love; I am not as young as I was twenty years ago.’

“Delphine sung the air, sighing between each stanza.

“‘Shall I sing you another, Sir Lionel?’

“‘What is the matter with you? Why do you always call me Sir Lionel? And why ask me if you shall sing again, when you know how fond I am of music?’

“‘You never appear *fond* of any thing, I think. Why you sent Cupid out of the room this morning.’

“‘My dear Delphine, I am sure I am fond of you! I did

send him, whom you call Cupid, to his nursery, because he squalled most confoundedly; but I believe fathers are forgiven for not finding quite so much music in a child's cry as a mother discovers; but what is the matter with you? Has your favourite preacher discovered hypocrisy, or has your French maid fulfilled my prophecy, and married the groom?

“ ‘Odious!—No!’

“ ‘Are the Java sparrows dead?’

“ ‘Cruel!—No!’

“ ‘Have any of your fair friends proved perfidious; and are you the victim of a delicate misunderstanding?’

“ ‘It may be very amusing to you to laugh at my unfortunate susceptibility, Sir Lionel; but if you cannot (happily for yourself) feel as I do, it is not, I hope, too much to expect, that you will cease to turn me into ridicule.’

“ ‘Me!’

“ ‘Yes! Is it not sufficiently distressing that I perceive your affection alienated—torn from me? yet you delight in exhibiting that alienation to the whole world.’

“ She burst into a flood of tears. Nothing is so painful as to be present at a domestic quarrel; and I was about to retire, when Sir Lionel left the room.

“ ‘You see!’ she exclaimed, ‘his affections are quite estranged; he would not have left me thus before our marriage.’

“ ‘Probably not. You must excuse me, my dear friend, but it is evident to me you do not take into consideration that Sir Lionel, excellent, worthy as he is, is, nevertheless, a man without sentiment or imagination; consequently, you have no right to expect from him the minute attentions to those little points in your character which you regard so highly, and which he does not regard at all. His moral conduct is irreproachable.’

“ ‘I had rather he had a thousand faults; for then I could prove my generosity by forgiving them!’

“ ‘He is just, generous, and respected by all who know him.’

“ ‘Granted; but he has no heart!’

“ ‘He is more at home, even when in London, than half the men of my acquaintance; seldom at the clubs, and—’

“ ‘Clubs!’ repeated Delphine; ‘the name of club has been the death-knell to female comfort. Where are the young men of fashion and intellect to be found?—at the club! Where do men of literature fritter and dissipate their time?—at the club! What fascinates a married man and wiles him from his home?—the club! I succeeded in obtaining a promise from my hus-

band that he would never invite any member of a club to his house.'

" 'An exceedingly foolish act; because you cut him off from his most pleasant acquaintances, whom, as he could not see at home, he sought abroad. I will go all lengths with you in censuring clubs, but we would differ as to our method of suppressing them. Indeed, Delphine, if you managed your husband properly, you might be'—

" 'She would not suffer me to finish my sentence, but repeated—'*Manage!*—Manage my husband! Can you think so meanly of me, that I would condescend to manage!—What, wile him to an object!—No!—I will oppose him whenever I think him in error; but—*Manage!*—We will talk no more upon the subject. I am a poor desolate creature, distinguished by splendid misery, and more alone in my magnificence, more miserable amid sculpture, and paintings, and gold, than the beggar who supplicates at my gate for food. Yet you, Constance, remember when my heart was warm and open, and when I formed plans for the good of my fellow-beings, and for the happiness of that very man who is now my curse!'

" 'She buried her face in her hands, and wept long and bitterly. You may be well assured that I reasoned, argued, and prayed with her, until my own spirits began to fail beneath the exertion. It was useless all! and it is ever useless to argue with people who reply by their feelings, not their reason. Poor thing! she was casting the blessings of the Almighty from her; she was labouring for her own misery and the misery of others. Sir Lionel was one of those upright, honest, sober, straight-forward characters, who are so firmly convinced of the rectitude of their own principles, that they become obstinate, while they only think they are firm. Whenever a sensible woman has one of those worthy sort of men to deal with, let her begin as she means to continue—not yielding too much at first; for whatever habit he adopts during the honey-moon, he will continue; and let her expect as much as she pleases from his justice, but as little as possible from his generosity. After all these are the best husbands; for they remain firm to their principles, and are ever ready to acknowledge the *mental* beauty, which a wise woman will always have in reserve by the time her personal attractions are on the decline.

" 'I am grieved,' he would say to me, 'that Delphine is so completely the slave of her fancies; but you cannot expect me to feel for her as if her misfortunes were real.'

" 'But they are *real* to her, in six cases out of seven; it is the estimation in which we hold things that stamps their import

with us. You cannot *reason* her out of her conceits; you can only turn the course of her ideas, direct her feelings into another channel, and'—

“‘But why not *reason*?’ he interrupted; ‘surely you do not mean that Delphine is not a reasonable being?’

“‘Certainly not; but I mean that her reason is so overgrown by her imagination, that, until that imagination is worn down by being directed to facts, not feelings, she is unable to exercise, or even appreciate, the quality you lay so much stress upon; her mental education has been one of error; her mind has been grossly mismanaged, and she is only an infant, as far as her reason is concerned.’

“Sir Lionel looked, as he really was, sorely perplexed; and wished, from his heart, that he had remained in state of single blessedness. ‘She ought to remember,’ he said, after a pause, ‘that I am *too old* to humour her fancies.’ I had little more to say to a man, however kind, excellent, and even *wise* he might be on other topics, who pleaded his years of fifty, to a woman of twenty, as an *excuse* for his not comprehending the delicate shades of romance! And yet, how little women consider difference of age in matters of the affections; there is an innate sensuality in mankind, which prevents their ever knowing, and seldom valuing, the depths and the earnest purity of woman’s love! Poor Delphine! her peace continued unrestored, her imagination uncurbed; and, in the midst of affluence, she surrounded herself with acute suffering:—she constantly reminded me of those devotees of superstition, who inflict scourgings and wounds upon themselves, and fancy they are called to this self-torture by a benevolent and merciful God.

“It would appear, even to you, Myra, overstrained and impossible, if I were to recount a tythe of her miseries; how, though young and beautiful, her husband became estranged; and how, with all the warmth and generosity so essential in the formation of friendship, her friends fell from around her, like leaves from off the trees of autumn; for she was perpetually taking offence at imaginary wrongs, and thus effacing impressions which, if at all under the dominion of reason, she would have sought to preserve and sanctify within her soul. Her children (she had three) she was, of course, most unfitted to manage or direct; and, as she selected their governess for some ideal qualifications, the poor little creatures were left to the mismanagement of fashionable servants. I must do Sir Lionel the justice to say, that, after endeavouring in vain to convince Delphine of her error with respect to their offspring, he removed the two eldest from the contagion of her example.

Yet, necessary as this was, it almost broke her heart. I had been on the Continent for nearly four years; when I returned, they, or rather she, was living in Upper Brook Street, and as her mind, unsatisfied at home, sought excitement abroad, I found that she had, during the last season, dashed wildly into the gaieties of the second class of London society: the bloom upon her beautiful cheek was false, but the smile upon her quivering lip was falser still. She had become a patroness of art and literature, and, unfortunately for the dignity of both, there are those who submit to such dominion, and pay it in the coin of flattery and meanness. Yet Delphine—poor Delphine! was still in earnest, and in earnest too, in expecting that those whom she *fêted* and caressed, would regard and cherish—*her reputation!* Sad is the condition of that woman whose reputation requires defence! better, a thousand times, she should lay down her head and die, than raise it up and live to breathe the air which calumny has breathed upon. O, that some law-giver would arise among us, and make clear the path which is beset by dangers for any woman who steps from off the threshold of her own door: much is there to lure her forth, and yet, if *once* she leaves the sanctuary, she can no more return!

“There were rumours abroad that Delphine had become a philosopher; and murmurs and wonders, and hints and exclamations, and lampoons; and Delphine so far forgot her delicacy as to laugh at them. She even pretended to patronize a caricature of herself, which she must have longed to tear to pieces. I did this—before a parcel of sycophants who were lauding her ‘sweetness and generosity in permitting the vile thing to remain on the table of her saloon’—I tore it, and trampled it beneath my feet; nor did I heed the titters and smiles of the hundred, who regretted its destruction because, within their own hearts, they delighted to see her defamed.

“Delphine, I found, though she had mixed much in, had nothing increased her knowledge of, the world. She was as one who sees visions, and dreams dreams; she lived only in excitement—a state of existence the most destructive to reason. I am never in real dread of a woman falling into error, *until she begins to despise the opinion of the world.* Love of approbation supplies the place of many virtues; but I did tremble for Delphine when I heard her speak of intimates, whom the good, the honourable, and the virtuous, named not. I inquired for her husband—‘He was shooting at Lord R.’s, and was never at home.’ For her children—the youngest was up stairs, asleep; I should see it after the company had departed. And I did see it! When all were gone, and we were left alone, she hurried,

as much, I thought, from a desire to escape from me and from herself, as from maternal tenderness, to the chamber of her sleeping boy. She flung herself upon her knees by its couch—she buried her face in its pillow—and she sobbed long and bitterly; then, craving a pardon she need not have desired, for my heart wept with her, the first words of unpolluted truth I had heard her utter that night, burst from her lips, as, with a long-drawn sigh, while gazing on the child, the tears still glittering on her cheeks, she exclaimed—‘And yet, I am happier now than I have been all night!’

“There spoke nature’s honest triumph. She was happier *there*, gazing on her boy, than in her perfumed rooms, where flattery gilded sin.”

The old lady paused; the knitting-needles ceased to glitter in her fingers; she stopped, as if to pick up a handkerchief, which was not on the ground; and finally turned away to hide her tears. At last she continued—

“And yet, the next morning, word was brought to me that she had, under some new and sudden impulse, deserted that very child—betrayed her husband’s honour, and sacrificed her own—and left a letter for me, full of the cant of philosophy, about her being convinced that, as she detested Sir Lionel, she should not again meet him; that he had promised her he would suffer her to pursue, unmolested, her own course; and yet she had just learned that it was his intention to return the next morning; with much more, that I would not repeat if I could, about the union of hearts, and the sympathy of souls. To think that any freeborn spirit would descend so low as to confess that reason is not stronger far than what they madly term their destiny!—To suppose that the Almighty would breathe the essence of himself into our bodies, and yet not give us strength to withstand evil, if we but wield the right weapons which overcome iniquity!

“I went to the house, and I shall never forget the appearance of her husband. He had always placed the most implicit confidence in her honour, wild and far-fetched as he knew were her theories and her practices: still he would not believe that she ever meditated guilt; nor do I believe she did: it took her unawares, but he should the more have guarded against it. He sat in that splendid saloon, where all remained in the confusion of the last night’s revel, and the bright light of the glorious sun putting to shame the disorder of the whole. His head bent to the earth, while he strained his child to his bosom, who terrified at his emotions, conscious that his mamma was gone, and his papa returned, and that some terrible calamity had

had overwhelmed them, remained pale and passive within his grasp. It was an awful picture !—the struggles of that upright and honourable man to restrain his feelings, to appear calm and dignified under the heaviest calamity which can befall a created being. He stood up to receive me, but he could not speak. I perceived that he had taken her picture from its frame, and cut it into shreds. When he let the boy escape from his arms, and made some efforts at conversation, the poor child picked up the fragments, and placed them together : his father perceived his occupation, and snatching him to his bosom, shed an abundance of tears, the first he had shed since his bereavement.

“How agonizing it is to see a man shed tears ! Women seem in some degree born for weeping ; but, in men, it appears a convulsion too painful to look upon. Then when he opened his heart to me upon the subject—when he spoke of the breadth and depth and richness of his love for her who had, within so short a time, set his name as a mark for scorn—I felt how utterly her mind must have been perverted, not to have set such a man’s perfections against his peculiarities, and lived with him a happy and blameless life. The hand of affliction was on him, and, though he felt his shame, he began to brave it nobly—he rose above it ; and instead of threatening her with the thunders of his wrath, he spoke to me about the best means of withdrawing her from vice, and placing her in a safe retreat, where the scoffs of the world should not molest her.

“‘How will she, who shrank from imaginary evil, be able to sustain herself against what she must now endure?’ he said. ‘When we were married, she, with her usual liberality, would reserve no portion of her estates in her own hands ; but she shall want for nothing.’ And then he conjured me to seek her out ; breathing at one time tenderness, at another, horror for her abandonment ; and manifesting more feeling, more generosity, than I could have believed he possessed.

“How much excellence is shut up in human hearts, which the key of circumstance never unlocks. I should not have known the virtues of Sir Lionel Leister, but for his misfortune ; and, as it was, no other saw into his soul. The world—the cruel world—laughed at him ; and why ? because his head was gray ! Alas ! the greenness of the heart will make the head white before its years are many : the unfeeling have few gray hairs.

“It is a strange record, but that same night the penitent Delphine, of herself, sought the protection of my roof. She had only tasted of the cup of sin, but the taste was so bitter

that she dashed it from her lips. She forsook the man who, with keen and subtle cunning, betrayed her to destruction;—she forsook him the instant she discovered his unworthiness;—she cast from her the affection that had grown in her heart, and the strength of which she had no conception of until her fatal error, to which, as usual, she was hurried by her unrestrained imagination. When this man had, as he thought, obtained the greatest dominion over her—when he fancied that, having passed the Rubicon, she dared not retreat—then, and not till then, did he permit her to see the sordid and sensual quality of his mind; and, with the conviction of his unworthiness, came her determination to abandon him on the instant.”

“How did you receive her?” enquired Myra.

“You know,” answered the old lady, quietly, “what our REDEEMER said to one who, when He commenced speaking, had not even forsaken the evil of her ways. I hope I am a follower of his.”

“And her husband?”

“He could not receive her as his wife, nor did she desire it; and yet he endeavoured to shield her from the world—from its reproaches and its scorn. Had Sir Lionel preached a thousand sermons to Delphine, he could not have convinced her so thoroughly of the advantage of reason, and the blessings that must always arise from the exercise of a well-directed mind. Now that, by her own act, she had deprived herself *for ever* of his countenance and society, she became sensible of his excellence; and her mind, still prone to run into extremes, exaggerated the very perfections whose existence, a little time before, she had denied. The qualities for which she had at first loved him had their origin in her imagination, but now she learned to appreciate those which he really possessed. It was heart-rending to witness her remorse, particularly when informed that her children could not be permitted even to visit her.

“‘The only chance they have of escaping the bitterness I now feel,’ said Sir Lionel, ‘is by keeping them apart from their mother. I will never subject *them* to the consciousness of their disgrace by a public appeal to the laws of my country. By such a course, though a villain remains unpunished, *her* name will escape being handed down to posterity with the mark of shame labelled upon what has hitherto been unspotted.’

“I sat days and days, and nights and nights, with Delphine. Could I record for you her penitence her agonies, her tears, you would accuse me of exaggeration—you would hardly believe it possible that human nature could endure such suffering

and live. Owing to the generous behaviour of her husband, and from the circumstance of her seeking the protection of my house in little more than twenty-four hours after her disappearance from her own, 'the affair of Lady Leister' was soon generally forgotten; a few weeks after, an elopement of much more decided character set the talkers talking on a new theme of exciting interest. After the first burst of curiosity, it was delicately whispered about by her '*kind and intimate friends*;' and certain gentlemen of the long robe were astonished at the husband's forbearance; while others, who liked her ladyship's parties, and had often the loan of her box at the theatres, wondered and surmised how she would be again received into society.

"The violent agitation of her feelings brought on brain fever, and then, during the long night watches, and in the strongest paroxysms of the disease, Sir Lionel would steal into her chamber, apply the ice to her fevered brain, and the cup to her burning lip; but, before she recovered, his gray hair had become white, and, calm and unromantic though he was, I saw, and saw truly, that *he* was hastening to his grave. He commanded me never to let her know who had ministered to her during her mind's wanderings; and I kept my word; but she needed not that proof of his tenderness to increase her repentance, which was deep and genuine; indeed, whatever Delphine's faults had been, she was incapable of deception. Her soul, though full of error, was above the pettiness of little faults, and she fearlessly pursued her career, whether of good or evil, without wishing to conceal either her progress or her object; the latter was frequently unknown to herself, for she was perpetually vacillating from one passion to another.

"For some time after that fearful illness, however, her mind seemed impregnated with but one idea; it haunted her dreams, it pursued her by day, and embittered all her comforts. She had retired to the country, and her affectionate heart sought amid trees, and birds, and flowers, things to commune with and love; but still it returned to its own bitterness: the budding trees reminded her of those young blossoms of eternity which had sprung from herself, but whom now she could neither foster nor protect. 'The birds,' she would say, 'may feed their offspring and teach their wings to soar; but when, hereafter, *my* children look me in the face, they will not know their mother!'

"I have said that Sir Lionel was hastening to his grave. His mind had not the elasticity of hers; if his feelings were less acute, they were the more continued. He had no bursts of

grief, but the iron had at once entered into his soul; and, after the course of a few months, we heard he was dying at Leister Park. Delphine, when the intelligence reached her, became almost frantic with grief. The night was fierce and tempestuous, and brilliant lightning swept athwart the sky; yet she ordered the carriage on the instant, and set forth, amid the war of elements, that she might receive his forgiveness from his own lips:—she little knew how fully it had been bestowed, when he prayed beside her during her unconscious ravings. You know how steep and dangerous is the hill which leads to the park gates; the horses took fright as they descended, and we were both thrown out, providentially without sustaining any injury. She heeded neither the accident nor the storm, but continued her way on foot to where the moving lights, and the crowded, yet silent, rooms, told too plainly what was anticipated.

“She pressed my arm closely to her heart when the astonished porter opened the portal to a mistress he had not seen for two years. ‘Ask! ask!’ she murmured, in a low, thick voice, ‘I cannot.’ ‘Sir Lionel—’ I said, and could say no more.

“‘He still lives,’ was the reply; and in an instant she glided past me, and I saw her flitting like a shadow up the marble stairs. In less time than I can describe it, came a long and piercing scream, so piercing that the old servant clasped his hands, and exclaimed, ‘It is over!’ And so it was. Her husband’s breath departed as she burst into the chamber, and I found her arms enwreathed around his neck. Will you believe that he who sought to disengage those arms from that embrace was her own son, her eldest born! and that when she would have kissed his cheek, as we were bearing her from the house, he turned it from her lips!”

“Poor Delphine!” ejaculated Myra. “Her imaginary troubles had been converted into trials of the bitterest kind,”

“True,” replied her aunt, “but with my old friendship, warmer about my heart than its own life-blood, I see how completely the cup was of her own mixing; and I have told her story to very little purpose, if you do not perceive how her trials, from their commencement, originated in an unrestricted imagination.”

“What a pity that such a mind should not have been well directed!”

“True, indeed. Parents, who have female children to launch into the world, would do well to remember that, as women’s trials are of the affections, it becomes only the more

necessary to direct those affections into proper channels."

"But, dear aunt," continued Myra, "Delphine was then young, and she is now old; is there nothing more to tell? I suppose she was quite cured of her romance? and I want to know about her children; besides, I have always heard her called Mrs. Barrington, not Lady Leister."

"Delphine was certainly young when she became a widow, and she found that Sir Lionel had returned to her the half of her fortune, settling the other half upon her daughter, their second child, but from which Miss Leister was to derive no advantage until she was five and twenty. Your other question Myra, savours of thoughtlessness; it was, 'Is there nothing more to tell?' as if a single leaf in the book of life could be turned over by the finger of time, and present *nothing* but a blank page, to eternity. Alas! the hours, the minutes of our lives are big with incident; the fruits of past, the flowers of coming, years—the hopes, the fears, the sighs, the smiles—the unrecorded, but not unfelt, impurities of our nature—the evil struggling with the good—who would dare to read the faithful record of their own heart's thoughts if they could have been recorded!

"'Nothing!' What fools men were to coin us such a word; a word that Nature knows not of, that Time does not acknowledge. As if there were a vacuum in air, or space, or aught that the Almighty made. 'Tis a fool's word!"

Myra could not help smiling at the sudden earnestness of her aunt; and the old lady continued, in a more sober strain:—

"It is not easy, Myra, to be *cured*, as you call it, of a habit, which has been sown in infancy, cherished for years, and which has impregnated all our qualities with its essence: the sentiments discover the colour of their original tincture, and reason finds it more difficult to deal with habit than with aught else. It is no easy matter to determine what portions of our own character we overrate; so as to separate the good from the bad. If I wanted to make up a history, I might enlarge upon her reformation, and talk of her miraculous conversion, and how she settled into a reasoning and reasonable woman; but then I should be untrue to human nature: it is far more difficult to change the current of the mind than is generally imagined. Delphine went abroad; she gained information, and her deep and bitter trials had sobered, but not *destroyed*, an imagination which, even when sobered, was still too vivid. Her thirst for excitement returned, as time silently and slowly passed the thickening veil of years over past events. She became as one of the olden time; she existed only in the me—

mory of past ages: and she amused many of her leisure hours in proving that the crimes, so called, of those of the antediluvian world, were only an exaggeration of virtue. The singularity of her opinions, her rare beauty, her manners and conversation, the extent of her information, and above all, the tone of melancholy which, emanating from her heart, thrilled its cadences through her frame, made her so much an object of interest abroad, that she returned to England laden with a reputation for talents and accomplishments which few women ever acquire. But our country-folk have, unfortunately, a prejudice against all who acquire celebrity in a foreign land; and I have never known an instance of one greatly admired at the court of France, or sung of in the land of sunny Italy, being favoured in England. I do not speak of *public* favourites, but of those who may be, with more propriety, termed private ones.

“I think Delphine had hoped that her errors would have been forgotten, and that she might, at least, have held the first place among the *savans* of her own sex; but, whatever the men were disposed to do, the woman could not forgive her for the possession of wit and beauty; but for these two qualities, she might, at the age of five and forty, have ‘played at cards and died’ in the self-same coterie she once belonged to!”

“What!” exclaimed Myra, “you, who profess so earnestly to be the friend of your own sex, have I caught you satirizing?”

“Friendship makes me *feel for*, but does not *blind me to*, the failings of those I love. Nine women out of ten (and I have made my calculation with rare arithmetical precision) would sooner forgive a woman for frailty, than for the sin of beauty, or the greater sin of wit; and why? because their own minds have been crushed, and they are taught to dread whatever is not strictly conventional. Delphine was thrown back either upon male society—where she could have dictated laws, and, even at that age, was admired for her loveliness—or upon her own resources, and the friendship of two or three old women like myself, whose rank and age made them the fearless rulers of their own actions: she chose the latter, and is, I think, satisfied. Her sons are abroad in the world; and, which I believe I stated before, as she resumed her maiden name when she felt how she had degraded her husband’s ancient title, they felt absolved from paying her any attention.

“It was only last season that Delphine and myself went to the opera to hear Grisi, whose grace captivates more than her melody. You have heard me say how passionately she loves

music; and as it is *the music*, and not the *monde*, she wishes to enter into, she invariably seats herself at the back of the box. Once or twice during the performance she leant forward; and, as the ballet had commenced, we were about retiring, when our door opened, and a young lady rushed in, and threw herself on my poor friend's bosom.

"It was her daughter!

"She had gathered from some conversation which took place between her guardian and her *chaperone*, that her mother was in the box next to the one they occupied, and notwithstanding the prohibition which had been adhered to for years, the affectionate creature watched for an opportunity to look upon that parent whom she loved with an enthusiasm which savoured strongly of her mother. 'And you are my mother!' she repeated, after indulging in a long embrace—'and you are my mother—my own, own mother!—and you are so beautiful!—my mother!—my own, own mother!'—and she gazed on her with an earnestness that drew tears from her guardian's eyes, who, thunderstruck at her impetuosity, had entered soon after. His manner speedily froze into politeness; he possessed power, and I could not condemn him for exercising it. They wept long and bitterly in each other's arms—they wept unseen except by Miss Leister's guardian and myself. There was a *festa*, and a ballet of gorgeous magnificence upon the stage, and cries of, 'Bravo!' thundered to the roof; yet, within a narrow space, there was a depth, an intensity of agony, which you may feel, but I cannot describe. At last nature yielded to the struggle, and the poor girl fainted. 'Take her away now, Sir,' said Delphine; 'I know I am unworthy, and will not attempt any thing that would be at variance with her father's will. May God so bless and reward you, as you deal justice to that lonely girl!'

"'I perceive,' she added, 'she is cursed with her mother's susceptibility; I would almost sooner see her in her grave!'

"'Alas! that poor girl is now dying of incipient consumption, and yet they will not suffer her mother to watch by her bedside, or to pay her more than a half-hour's visit! This, to a mother, Myra, is no imaginary trial,'

"'It is a fearful lesson!' sighed Myra; 'I would not pursue it further. What if the girl should die?'

"'God's will be done!' replied the old lady, meekly; 'I wish I could read aloud to the world all the examples I have noted of great and glorious women, lost for ever to society, through the defects of education. A judicious husbandman watches the culture of the plant, the soundness of the root,

and then knows what he has to look forward to; while we, poor labourers in the moral garden, expect strength from the willow, and docility from the oak. Women are all educated with reference to fashion, which multiplies their trials by diminishing their strength; and—”

The old lady was interrupted by the receipt of a letter from Delphine, which she did not read without many tears.

“It is over! My daughter is dead! Feel for me, weep for me, pray for me—my friend! You, who knew me in the days of my unsubdued youth, pray for me! You, who knew me during the reign of my uncontrolled imagination, pray for me! You, who knew me when I breathed only incense, and heard no voice but the voice of flattery, pray for me! You, who knew me a spotless wife and a joyful mother, pray for me! You, who knew and sought to dispel the clouds with which folly and fashion obscured my days, pray for me! You, who saved me from the depths of despair, and received a polluted creature into the sanctuary of your pure home, pray for me! Pray for me, now and always! but especially now, when my child is dead. She lies before me at this moment—there! Those arms which entwined around me on *that* night, when first she called me ‘*mother!*’—the sweetest music I had ever heard; those arms will never, *never* again press a fallen mother, but still *a mother*, to that bosom! Oh! if they had only suffered me to remain with her during the last week, it would have been enough! but they would not: it was the deepest of all my humiliations. They could not think that the most depraved being who ever existed could contaminate its own child, But I have no right to murmur! It has been ordained that the residue of a woman’s life, though it be steeped in tears, cannot atone for one, only one, fault!

“Forgive me, my friend, I would not repine, yet Nature heaves within me, when I remember how she entreated that I might be suffered to remain with her. Did I say I had only one fault, one crime to atone for! Alas! my whole life has been a tissue of faults; and, above all, the great one, the greatest of the whole, that I misused the talents God had given me; and, instead of becoming distinguished for all that should make woman like the eastern perfume, whose fragrance increases the longer it exists, I have been—!

“Heaven preserve me! I thought the pale corpse sighed!

“Oh! spirit of my child! look on thy erring mother, and, if it be permitted, meet her when death shall separate, what *might*

have been, a glorious spirit, from earth's passions and earth's clay! Did I write—'glorious spirit'—I wrote even as the heathen did. Humility is the Christian's glory, and faith his shield. Shield me, O faith! from my own pride, and humble me to the cross which was borne by an atoning Saviour.

"How beautiful she looks!—they have left us quite alone. Her mother is trusted at last—with what? the ashes of her child! My husband meant not this—he could not mean it!

"Come to me, my friend; this death-bed has no terror! Young and beautiful, she smiles at what philosophers and kings tremble but to think upon. I would fain be thankful that she is gone; if she had lived, the cruel world, perhaps a heartless husband, might have called her mother——what she was! it would have killed the gentle child; or she might have lived to suffer, as I have suffered!

"Come;—we can sit together here, and talk of time and of eternity; and you shall reason me to what you will. Constance, my heart is broken; it lies *there*, within her shroud, buried in her bosom! Will you believe that my ambition breathed new life, when I thought on what she would be; and, though cut off from her society, I planned, and planned, and triumphed in her triumphs! My imagination was at work as for myself; and the visions of my youth returned again! Can you forgive me this?—it is a frank confession.

"Come to me, and, as you have often done, extract wisdom from affliction!"

THE MOSSPITS.

The Trials of Agnes Hoskins.

IN one of the most highly cultivated counties of England, near a town the name of which I shall conceal under that of Mondrich the following circumstances occurred. My tale is but a simple narration, and has little to recommend it but its reality. To those who yearn after exaggerated pictures of life, in any situation, it may be dull and wearisome; but those who can appreciate the sufferings and struggles of virtue, under trials of a more than ordinary nature, will, I doubt not, feel interested in what I am about to relate.

"Well, good night, Mr. Hinton, good night; we are neighbours now, and shall often meet," said Edward Hoskins, as he closed the cottage-door after his retreating guest. "A very

pleasant fellow, Agnes," he continued, addressing his wife : "though you were not particularly civil to him, I know who was;" and his bright blue eye rested for a moment on his sister-in-law—a merry-looking maiden, busied in assisting Agnes Hoskins in placing aside the remains of their frugal supper.

"For shame, Ned!" retorted the blushing Jessy; "but you are ever teasing me in some way or other; and here's my sister says it is very wrong to be putting such things into my head."

Agnes turned her handsome, cheerful countenance towards her sister, and observed, in a low and more serious tone of voice than was her wont, "Jessy, I should be indeed sorry if any thing got into either your head or your heart which it would be necessary to root out again."

"Well," laughed Edward, "I don't see what harm Harry Hinton's getting into her head, or heart either, could do; he is a good-tempered, free, frank, industrious——"

"Stop there, Edward," interrupted his wife, laying her hand on his arm, "not industrious—surely not industrious!"

"No; perhaps not that exactly," replied Ned, "not what you would call industrious. But really, Agnes, I think we both work too hard;—we ought, as Harry says, take a little pleasure now and then, and we should return to our daily labour with more earnestness, and do all the better for it."

"I don't think we need do better: your situation at the manor, the produce of your own little farm—all contribute to render us independent. And as to pleasure—as to happiness, Ned, look there!"

She drew aside a large linen cloth that fell from the upper part of her baby's cradle, so as to shade it from the light. Although the little thing had not cried, it was awake; and, as the father stooped to kiss it, the hands were stretched forward to meet him, and the rosy lips parted by the light noiseless laughter of earliest infancy! It was a blessed moment: both parents gazed upon their child, and, as the mother placed it to her bosom, the father said, in a subdued tone "You are right Agnes; thank God, we are happy; and though love, as you were better brought up than I was, I should like to be richer for your sake, yet somehow I think it shows you to more advantage, and draws you more into my heart, to be as you are. What the minister said of you was true, though I did not mean to tell it you, lest it might make you conceited:—'Your wife, Hoskins,' said he, 'is never without a jar of honey, and a flask of oil, to sweeten and soften your path through life.'"

"Reach down the Bible, Jessy; although it is past ten, we must not go to bed without our chapter," observed Agnes, after

a long pause. "But what books are placed upon it, Jessy?"

"A volume of songs and a novel, sister."

Agnes continued, in a reproving tone, "I thought I had no need to tell you that *that* shelf was appropriated to the Bible, Prayer, and Hymn-book only; profane and sacred things should never mingle."

"It was not Jessy, but Hinton, who put them there," said Edward. Agnes sighed. "Why do you sigh so heavily?" enquired the husband, as he turned over the leaves to find one of his wife's favourite chapters.

"Because it confirms my opinion of our new neighbour. The word of God will be ever treated by a true Christian with outward respect—the proof of inward reverence. One who venerates Scripture could not rest a song-book even upon its binding."

Edward made no reply, and soon after the party retired to rest.

This little passage in the lives of those humble individuals occurred about the latter end of the month of April, a few years ago, in a retired spot, near the town of Mondrich, to which I shall give the name of Moss pits. It was a sweet and quiet nesting of five cottages, inhabited, with one exception, by happy industrious people. Four of these dwellings were joined together; the fifth, the abode of Hoskins, stood apart, surrounded by a blossoming garden, and was of a larger size than the others. The scene might be aptly described as—

"A gentle, lonely place; the path o'ergrown
With primroses, and broad-leav'd violets,
Arch'd by laburnums and the sweet woodbine.

* * * * *
Across the green a silver streamlet ran,
Hidden and silent, as it fear'd to wake
The deep tranquillity that dwelt and slept
Even on the full-leav'd trees."

It was far away from the public road, and one large oak spread its huge branches over the green in front of the Moss-pit cottages; the trunk was surrounded by a rustic seat, where the inhabitants met every fine evening, and discussed affairs of state or business with the affected sagacity of wiser heads. Hoskins possessed, as his wife had said, a lucrative situation—one that gave them abundant comforts, and would, if carefully husbanded, enable them to lay by a provision for after years.

Agnes and Jessy were the orphan daughters of a Presbyterian clergyman. Mrs. Hoskins was some years older than her giddy sister, and had enjoyed during her father's lifetime,

many advantages which he did not remain long enough in the world to bestow upon his youngest-born. Agnes had been chosen by the lady of the manor, Mrs. Cecil Wallingford, as a humble, *very* humble, companion for her daughter,—an only child, and a heiress: she was, therefore, to use the accepted phrase, “comfortably situated;” which, being interpreted, means, that she had her board, washing, and lodging, and the young lady’s society when she was ill or without company—dined with the housekeeper—rode either inside the carriage when her *friend* pleased, or outside on the dicky when ditto—curled the lap-dog’s hair—and sometimes suffered, under the practical jokes of her young tormentor, such mortifications as nought but her enduring spirit could have supported—was stared at, whenever seen, by the young men, who already scented the heiress’s gold afar off—and received divers lessons from Mrs. Cecil Wallingford, not on errors she had committed, but on those which the lady supposed she might commit. The dependent on this purse-proud family could not have been strictly called beautiful; but there was that about her which surpassed beauty—a kind, yet animated countenance, illumined by mild and frequently upturned eyes, which lent a sort of holy expression to her delicate features. Under her after-trials it seemed almost as if a heavenly communion supported her; for, while the tear trembled in her eye, the smile sprang to her lip, and she regained her serenity apparently without an effort.

Agnes was fortunate enough to make one real friend in this mighty family. The housekeeper, Mrs. Middleton, was a curate’s widow, and felt much and kindly for the situation of one so young and unprotected; she did all she could to soften the innumerable mortifications that awaited the pure and delicately-minded girl; and often, when the household had retired to rest, they would seek each other’s chamber, and hold sweet counsel together, thus imparting cheerfulness to the aged, and instruction to the young. When Agnes had been about twelve months at the manor, Edward Hoskins was strongly recommended on account of his great skill in horticulture and floriculture, to the situation of gardener in Mrs. Cecil Wallingford’s establishment, vacant by the death of the old man who had exercised unbounded dominion over grapery, pinery, and green-house, for nearly half a century. Hoskins wisely brought with him a new carnation of his own discovery, which had gained the first prize of the Horticultural Society. The splendid flower decided the matter, and he was immediately engaged at a salary of a hundred and ten guineas per annum, (as the lady found he could not only act as gardener, but as steward,)

and the very prettiest cottage at Moss pits was appropriated for his residence.

All was bustle in the servants' hall as the handsome young gardener talked for a moment with the head butler. The lady's-maid and chief house-duster positively quarrelled as to the right of first setting their caps at him; though they both agreed that he behaved very rudely in passing into the housekeeper's room without bestowing the slightest notice upon their pretty persons. Mrs. Middleton and her young friend were quietly seated at tea, when the butler respectfully asked permission to introduce the new resident. Long after Agnes had departed, he lingered, and lingered, and at last asked who the young lady was. Her history was at once told; and, to dismiss all matters of courtship briefly, they were soon married. To do Mrs. Cecil Wallingford justice, she behaved very generously to her protégée on the occasion, presented to the young couple some neat and appropriate furniture, stood godmother to their first infant, and Miss Cecil Wallingford (when sentimentally inclined) always talked of love in the Moss pit cottage, and her sweet humble friend Agnes Hoskins.

Much had been of course said, at the commencement of their union, as to the probability of Agnes being too dainty a damsel to make a useful wife; but a little time proved the incorrectness of such surmises. Hoskins insisted on Agnes domesticating her only sister with them, and went for her to Scotland, where she had previously resided with a distant relative. No further help than Jessy's was necessary to keep all things in order, and no dwelling, even at the Moss pits, was half so neat, half so cheerful, as their cottage. Indeed, cheerfulness was Agnes's peculiar attribute—that sweet, gentle, and unobtrusive cheerfulness, which is *felt* rather than seen. Her very voice told of happiness; her eyes beamed with faith and love; and the minister's description of one of the favourites of his flock was no less beautiful than true. The disposition of Jessy was not so valuable as that of her sister; she was more mirthful, more gay, and, alas! both giddy and inconsiderate; but then, as Edward kindly observed, “she was only seventeen, and every body could not be perfect like Agnes, who certainly was different from every one else.”

It is a happy thing when married folk believe perfection enthroned in each other; but it is a wise thing when they see each other's faults, and yet endeavour to conceal them. It is a severe trial of a woman's judgment, if she discover her mental superiority to the lord of her affections, and yet, while she secretly manages all things for the best, makes the world believe

that she is only the instrument of his will. A wise woman *will* do this, but it is only a wise woman who *can*.

Edward was certainly inferior to Agnes in intellect; and yet woman though she was, she never allowed her mind to rest upon the circumstance she could not avoid perceiving. *She* was a superior woman—*he* was only an ordinary man, but one in whom all kind elements were so happily blended, that his faults were forgotten in the contemplation of his better qualities. The great difference in their characters was, that Edward acted invariably from impulse—Agnes from principle.

My friends will remember that my little tale commenced in the gentle month of April, the kindly season sung of by the elegant Surry, as—

“The soote season, that bud and bloom forth brings,
With grene hath clad the hill, and eke the vale;
The nightingale with feathers new she sings,
The turtle to her mate hath told her tale.”

And passing over the two first months of summer, I come to the latter end of July. Stating at the same time, that, though nothing had occurred of a nature to destroy the actual quiet of our Moss-pit family, yet a great many nameless events had filled the mind of Agnes with an apprehension which she could not account for, and dreaded to encourage. Harry Hinton was always so coolly received by her that he spent very little time at their cottage; and Agnes was continually on the watch to prevent any intimacy between Jessy and their idle neighbour. Still it was almost certain that the thoughtless girl regarded Harry with any thing but indifference; and the proximity of their dwellings rendered it impossible to prevent their meeting. If Jessy took her little nephew into the garden, Hinton was most likely in his; if she stood at the door, Hinton passed it; if she went for water to the well, Hinton would carry the pitcher, at all events, as far as the great tree that shaded them from observation; and, above all, Agnes could not make either her husband or her sister think otherwise than well of Harry Hinton. Edward did not spend his evenings as constantly at home as before his acquaintance with his neighbour; Mrs. Cecil Wallingford complained that her grapes were not so fine as they had been; and the clergyman called one morning to reprimand her husband for being absent from Sabbath worship. Agnes witnessed the reproof, and heard also—what shocked her still more—her Edward utter a decided falsehood as to the cause. She knew that he had gone with Hinton, under some pretext or other, two successive Sundays to the next market-town; and when he stated he had been compelled,

through the negligence of the under-gardener, to remain at the Manor while he should have been at church, his wife's face was suffused with the blush of shame, and she left their little sitting-room with a sense of degradation both new and insupportable to a mind like hers. The bed-room to which she retired was at the back of the house, and her child, who hourly improved in strength and beauty, was sleeping calmly on the snowy coverlet. The open window was literally curtained with roses and woodbine, through which the sunbeams could not penetrate; her fingers wandered amid their foliage, while her tearful gaze was fixed upon her boy: and she started as from a dream when the clear merry laugh of Jessy rang upon her ear: it did not harmonize with her feelings, and it was followed by words still more painful.

"You need not be afraid to speak to me, Jessy: your sister is too much occupied with the parson to heed you just now, and I long for the time that will make you mine, and remove you from her tyranny."

"Agnes is no tyrant, Harry," replied the maiden, "only a little strict, and I wish you would let me tell her——"

"What?" enquired Hinton, after waiting for some time the conclusion of Jessy's speech—"What do you want to tell her?—that I'm your lover?—why, silly lass, she knows that already!"

"No that exactly, but——"

"But what?"

"I should like to tell her what you think of our laws, and of the rights of men and women, and about that good gentleman in London, who proves we are all equal, and——"

"That you have as good a right to wear satin and gold, and ride in a coach, as Mrs. Cecil Wallingford herself, but Agnes would not believe you, Jessy, her mind is not comprehensive like yours."

"O Harry—Harry!" exclaimed the thoughtless girl, at the conclusion of her lover's speech, "how nice I should look in white satin and French curls! It is very hard that Agnes will persist in making me band my hair like a Methodist, but I cannot think I have as good a right to ride in a coach as Mrs. Wallingford, because, you know, all her relations keep carriages—and—mine——"

The sentence was left unfinished; but Hinton soon satisfied her scruples, as to Mrs. Cecil Wallingford and the carriage, by an encomium on her beauty, a reiterated assurance of what he termed *love*, and a present, which, first having received—secondly, having admired—thirdly, and lastly, she did not know what to do with.

“I don’t think Agnes would let me wear such a beautiful brooch; and I am sure she would not permit me to take a present from you, Harry,”

“You need not say any thing about it.”

“But Agnes might see it.”

“Then tell her you found it!”

Breathlessly did Agnes Hoskins wait for the reply, but she heard it not—the lovers had passed the window and walked on. Almost on the instant her husband entered the room, with an air of boisterous gaiety, and, as if he had quite forgotten the clergyman’s visit, rallied his wife upon the seriousness of her looks. She felt too much, and too deeply, to reply even with her usual smile. He took no notice of her change of manner—probably from a wish to avoid a recurrence to what he knew must have given her much pain—but fondled and kissed his child, and, taking it in his arms, was leaving the apartment, when Jessy quickly passed the door. “Stay, Edward; sister, come here,” exclaimed Agnes. Jessy did come, with a flushed cheek and a downcast eye.

“What have you this moment put into your bosom?” enquired Agnes; adding, without waiting for a reply, “I will not oblige you to utter the falsehood you have been directed to—where is the brooch that young Hinton gave you but now under this window? You tremble—you turn pale: Jessy, my sister Jessy!—when you crouched beside the heather and the harebell at your father’s feet, while the sun was sinking amid the hills of our own Scotland—there, at the cottage-door, when our aged parent taught you to lift up your *then* innocent hands to the Almighty in prayer and praise—I little thought you would have so soon forgotten his precepts!”

The thoughtless girl burst into tears, and Edward, whose good-nature was an active not a passive quality, kindly took her hand, and looking at his wife—“Do not be so angry, Agnes, at her receiving a love token; Harry meant no harm—that I’ll answer for; surely if he is to be her husband—”

“*Her* husband!” repeated Agnes, with an energy that startled both Edward and Jessy;—“the husband of Jessy Grey! I would rather shroud her for her coffin than see her married to a man devoid of religious and moral principle.”

“You are strangely prejudiced against poor Harry, and a thousand times more Methodistical than ever, Agnes,” observed her husband.

“I am not Methodistical, Edward—I am not changed—it is you who think differently; and, as the change has marred our happiness, you cannot wonder at my disliking him who has

wrought it. You were independent, industrious, and happy : you now talk of the wealth of your superiors ; you say it is wrong for them to possess so much, and yet *you* covet more ; Edward, now you seldom smile—or smile so that I would rather see you weep ; If you attend the village church your eyes and mind wander from your devotions, and you rejoice at the conclusion of the service. The flowers in your garden are neglected—”

“ Stop, Agnes !” interrupted Hoskins, “ you have lectured me pretty sharply, I think, for nothing ; have I ever suffered you to want ?—have I ever treated you unkindly ?”

“ O, no !—no Edward, not unkindly—not that *yet*.”

“ Nor ever will, my own Agnes ! I will be more with you, and show you how much you have wronged me, and Jessy too, by these misunderstandings.”

“ I will speak to my sister apart, Edward—give her the infant—there, Jessy, do not weep.”

Jessy left the room in tears. “ Now, in truth, Agnes,” said Hoskins, when the door was closed, “ your prejudices are amazing to me ; there is not a better-hearted fellow in the world than Harry, or a more clever—I own that he thinks a little too freely, and you women don’t understand that : the people are improving.”

“ Would,” ejaculated Agnes, “ that they felt Christianity to be their best legacy, and inherited the virtue of their ancestors !”

“ The very thing Harry says : he vows the landlords grow worse ; and unless the people take them in hand there’ll be no end to their tyranny.”

“ Did you ever experience any tyranny, Edward ?”

“ Never, Agnes.”

“ Did Hinton ?”

“ No—but yes he did, poor fellow, and that no later than last week. ’Squire Nicol’s fox-hounds and the whole hunt went right through his barley ; but that is not the worst of it—when he lived near Chester, his sister ran off with and was deserted by his landlord’s eldest son.”

“ I am not surprised at that,” replied Agnes, coolly, “ if he instructed his sister in the principles of equality, the rights of women, and Mr. Owen’s Morality. *She* only practised what *he* preached.”

Agnes then proceeded to state to her husband the conversation that had passed between Jessy and Harry Hinton ; in natural but forcible colours she portrayed the danger of his principles, aided by his insinuating manners, and concluded with

a request that Edward would at once relinquish so dangerous an acquaintance. Hoskins was much shocked at the idea that Hinton should have breathed such notions into the ear of the innocent girl, whom he loved with all the warmth of brotherly affection; he promised his wife that he would speak seriously to him on the subject, and unite with her in endeavouring to break off his connexion with Jessy Grey, whom Agnes declared she would send on a visit to an aged relative to her friend Mrs. Middleton, who dwelt near the Scottish border.

“I think your plan is best; absence and time *will* soon put love out of her head,” observed Edward.

“It *may* do so, and I hope it most fervently,” was the wife’s reply—and again she entreated her husband, even with tears, to avoid Hinton.

“I promise you faithfully so much, Agnes; but circumstances, which I cannot explain, will oblige me to see him occasionally; in fact, I am in his secrets, and it would be ungenerous to desert him when I know my friendship is of value to him; he may judge wrongly, at times; but I know him to be both clever, and as good-hearted a fellow as ever lived.”

Agnes shook her head, unbelievably, at the refuge of good-heartedness, under which such a multitude of sins shelter; and pleased at having, as she hoped, lessened his influence over her husband, and resolved upon a plan of action with her sister, she wisely for a time forbore any allusion to what at first so bitterly grieved her—Edward’s deviation from truth.

Heavy were the tears of Jessy when told that she must leave Moss pits for a season, and her sister refused to tell her destination. Once, and once only, did Harry Hinton speak on the subject to Edward Hoskins! But Edward firmly told him in that matter he would not interfere; Jessy was his wife’s sister, and consequently Agnes had the best right to determine how she was to be situated. “My wife says,” he continued, “that when Jessy comes of age she may do as she pleases, but till then she will act towards her as her father would have done had he lived till now.”

Hinton made no reply, and turned moodily away, muttering curses, not loud, but deep. Agnes, almost immediately after, journeyed to London, and placed Jessy under the care of a respectable female of her acquaintance, who was going to Berwick. It was not without many tears that the sisters parted; tears of reproachfulness and sorrow on the one side, and of affection and anxiety on the other. When Agnes returned, in the evening, to her cottage, she felt it very desolate; a strange girl, whom she had hired for the purpose, was nursing

her little boy. No Jessy's light step and gay smile welcomed her as in former times; and Edward was not at home—not come in—had not been home to dinner, nor to tea. She took the child in her arms, and seated herself on a little mound in the meadow that overlooked the high road; it was early in autumn, and troops of merry reapers passed from time to time, beguiling the way with song and noisy laughter; her boy sat on her knee, twisting the tough stems of the corn-flowers into what he lispingly called “posy,” and, ever and anon, pointing, with infant wonder, at the happy groups hastening to their quiet homes. Gradually, the passengers became fewer in number, the voices died away upon the hill, one by one the stars came forth in the blue heavens, and no note, save the creaking of the rail, disturbed the tranquillity that was covering the earth as with a mantle. The Moss-pit cottages, nesting in their little dell, looked the very abode of cheerfulness; and lights twinkled from two or three of the small-paned windows, showing that the dames within were busy with their small housewifery. The eyes of Agnes had rested for some moments upon the scene, when her boy's gestures drew her attention towards the road. She was somewhat surprised at observing a woman, whose tattered dress and red cloak gave her the appearance of a gipsy, forcing her way through the hedge, and approaching her at an uneven but hurried pace. If she had been struck by her boldness, her attention was riveted by the expression of her wild and restless eye, which both watched and wandered. She appeared young, and, perhaps, under other circumstances, would have been called pretty; her figure was slight, and her hair, of a light auburn, fell in profuse but unarranged tresses over her face. She was without shoes, and the blood streamed from a wound in her foot so as to attract the notice of the little boy, who pointed to it with one hand, while he wound his arm tightly round his mother's neck.

“You did wrong to trespass, young woman,” said Agnes, mildly, while the stranger stood gazing upon her with a peculiar and bewildered look—“you did wrong to trespass—but you have been sufficiently punished: wrap this handkerchief round your foot, and if you will follow me to the cottage I will give you a pair of old shoes to protect you.”

The woman did not accept the offered handkerchief; but, still staring at Mrs. Hoskins, who had risen from her grassy seat, at last said, “Do you want your fortune told?”

“No;” replied Agnes, “and, false as the art is, you have no pretension to it—you are not even a gipsy.”

“You say truly,” replied the girl; “I am not a gipsy; and

yet *I could* tell much that will happen to you—you must be the married one—where's the other?"

"If you mean my sister," replied Agnes, "she has left England."

"Left England!—left England!" repeated the young woman jumping and clapping her hands—"gone away from"—then suddenly changing the joyful tone in which she had spoken, added—"But not of her own accord—not of her own accord—no girl would leave *him* of her own accord."

Agnes looked upon her with astonishment, and the suspicion that the poor wanderer was a maniac occurred so forcibly to her mind, that she held her child closely to her bosom, and commenced returning to the Moss pits.

"Stop, Agnes Hoskins, stop!—*you* sent *her* away, and I would bless you if I knew how—but I cannot remember the words." She paused, pressed her soiled but delicate fingers to her brow, and sighed so deeply that Mrs. Hoskins could not have said an unkind word to her for worlds.

"He will be returning soon!" exclaimed the girl, at last, in a hurried tone; "but look you to your husband—may-be you love him; and it is very sad, as the song says—

‘To love—and love for ever,’

and then to find your lover go away just like the down off the thistle—and may-be for as light a breath! Well, keep him from Harry, or the curse will overshadow you; for I was as blithe and as happy as a nightingale till I kept his company—not but what I'm gay enough still—only I don't ever feel peaceful here (laying her hand on her heart)—yes, Jane is gay enough still, and does his bidding, too, as well as if he loved her; only I must not tell, because it would get Harry into trouble, that I dance round the burning ricks." She approached closely to Mrs. Hoskins while uttering the last sentence, which she pronounced slowly, and in an under-tone.

An illusion to a circumstance that had excited so much terror throughout the country, and made every one look with alarm to his own homestead, caused an involuntary shudder to pass over the frame of Agnes. The wild girl shrieked, and clapped her hands on her mouth; then, without uttering another sentence, retreated rapidly across the meadow. She had not, however, reached the spot where she entered, ere she retraced her steps with visible agitation.

"They are coming," said she, "and if he sees me here he will murder me outright; do—do, just let me hide in your

house till he goes to his own, and then I can go—for it will be dark, dark night, then.”

The poor creature trembled from head to foot, and, before Agnes had time to reply, had not only established herself in the cottage, but coiled herself into an inconceivably small space in a cupboard that opened into the little passage. Edward Hoskins and Harry Hinton were soon upon the green that fronted the cottage, and the flushed cheek and loud laughter of her husband told Agnes, but too plainly, he was intoxicated. Her first feeling was that of anger and disgust—her second brought the excuse, “it is not often thus with him;” though she could not but acknowledge, what every woman so circumstanced must feel, that each time she so beholds her husband must lessen her respect—and, without *that*, woman’s love for man is little worth.

“Well, Agnes—pale, pensive, as usual!” he exclaimed, as, notwithstanding his situation, she had advanced to the door to meet him. “Won’t you wish Harry good-night?”

“I am always to suffer in Mrs. Hoskins’s opinion, I fear, although I hurried her husband home. We saw some gipsies about, and I said they might frighten you”—he added, drawing nearly to the threshold of the door, and peering into her face with his small gray eye, which she used to characterize as “cold,” but which now appeared illumined by some secret fire—“did not you see any?”

“No;” replied Agnes, without shrinking from his gaze; “many persons passed on their way, but I did not recognize any as gipsies.” Her self-possession, doubtless, disarmed the querist—for, wishing her courteously good-night, he entered his cottage, and seemed determined to shut out intruders, by carefully barring doors and windows.

“So you saw poor Jessy off, my love?” exclaimed Hoskins, throwing himself on the chairs that stood near the table. “Don’t, for Heaven’s sake, look so calm and quiet—I know what you think—but I am sober—not quite cool perhaps—but sober—sober as a judge? why shouldn’t I be a judge? Well, if I’m not wise enough for a judge, you are for a judgess—though you are not always right; now you were wrong about Hinton, for he’d have made a good husband for Jessy—only, as I said, she’s your sister, not mine; so you’ve had your own way—banished your sister, and smashed that poor fellow’s heart all to pieces. But the coach must have come very quickly; I did not think you could have been home these two hours. Give me the boy Agnes, I have not had a kiss from either of you since I returned.”

Agnes held the child towards him, but—whether it was that

the little fellow retained a remembrance of the bleeding foot and the red cloak, or that he felt the antipathy of childhood to the smell of spirits, I cannot determine—he shrunk from his father and hid his face on his mother's bosom. Edward grew angry, and forcibly disengaged the boy, who, screamed more loudly, “mamma—mamma!”

“Take the brat!” ejaculated the father, with an oath, at the same moment throwing him with violence to Agnes—“take the brat; but I tell you that, whatever *you* may do, my own child sha'n't thwart me; this is what comes of its having an aristocratic god-mother; it already thinks my hands too rough to hold it, I suppose!”

A silly woman—nay, a woman with a moderate share of good sense, as it is called—would have replied to this, and high words would have ensued, and seeds of bitterness therewith been sown: but Agnes was a superior woman; so, without uttering a syllable, without suffering an unkind word or gesture to escape, she took the screaming infant out of the room, gave it into the arms of the little serving-maiden, and, having wiped those eyes to which unbidden tears had started, and offered up a silent but fervent prayer to the throne of God for wisdom to form and strength to persist in her good resolves, she returned to prepare her husband's supper with her own hands.

When Agnes had seen Edward to bed, she went to seek the poor wanderer, who had sheltered in the cupboard; but the girl was gone—how, it was difficult to conjecture, unless she had let herself down from the bed-room window, which appeared partially open. It must not be supposed that Agnes was one of those women who “humour” a husband in his faults, asserting, with a mock amiability (the sincerity of which I always doubt) that they “have no right to oppose him in his little ways.” A woman possessing a great and well-cultivated mind will be anxious that her husband shall both be and appear perfection, and she will watch for a fitting opportunity to point out, with gentleness and humility, whatever his better judgment, if exercised, would also declare wrong. Agnes knew it was not when he was intoxicated, that she ought to say a word calculated to add fuel to the flame, but her resolution was not less decidedly taken to combat, with her gentle strength, the growing evil.

The next morning Edward was very penitent, and for an entire week there was no recurrence of the same fault; but the evil did continue; and, with anguish which only a wife so circumstanced can feel or understand, Agnes saw that her influence and happiness were both decaying; the serpent-coil

was round and round her husband, and each day added to its closeness and to its strength; she prayed, she wept, she intreated; and sometimes Edward himself would seem bitterly to feel his weakness and vow to amend it; but Hinton had attained that command over him which the powerful mind possesses over the weaker; and his duty, his business, were neglected, for the society of him he termed his friend. Mrs. Cecil Wallingford called herself upon Agnes, and told her that unless Edward paid more attention to her affairs, however unwillingly, she should be obliged to get some one else to act as steward and gardener. The suffering wife assured the lady that she would do her utmost to correct his habits, of which she refrained from complaining. Mrs. Wallingford, to say the truth, felt sincere sorrow for the altered looks of her protégée, and said many kind and complimentary things to Agnes on the extreme beauty of the bud, which seemed to increase in size and loveliness in proportion to the fading of its parent flower.

Mrs. Wallingford had hardly departed when Agnes received the following letter:—

“Berwick, Nov. 23.

“MY DEAR FRIEND,—It is with very sincere sorrow I inform you, that last night, without any reason that I can discover, your sister left my house; and all attempts to trace her, during the day, have been ineffectual. Lately she manifested a great uneasiness and restlessness of disposition, which I tried in vain to combat. Perhaps she has returned to you; let me hear immediately; and, praying to the Almighty to preserve you and yours in peace and happiness,

“Believe me your truly affectionate, “T. MIDDLETON.”

Agnes sat, with the open letter in her hand, more like a thing of marble than a breathing creature; and when her husband came in she presented it to him, and covering her face with her hands, wept long and bitterly.

“Hinton knows of this, Edward,” she said at last, “and must be spoken to on the subject.”

“Hinton knows no more of it than you do; how could he? To my certain knowledge he has never been one day or night from home since she left, and how could he get to Berwick and back in that time, think you? Poor Jessy! it would have been better she had married Hinton than ran off with no one knows who; indeed, Agnes, you were wrong in sending her from us; but troubles never come alone—the last frost has got into the pinery, and Mrs. Cecil Wallingford says it’s my fault; that

proud lady must alter her tone, or she'll get served out like her neighbours—there are ways of bringing fine people down—Mr. Flyhill's barns and kennel were burned last night."

"What awful times!" ejaculated Agnes; "but I know you better, Edward, than to believe you would ever approve of such dreadful doings; you know your duty to your God, your country, and your neighbour; and nothing, I am sure, would ever induce you to act contrary to it. But as to Hinton, I believe he is engaged in these horrid acts—nay, Edward, you cannot deceive me, I have combated your extraordinary infatuation in his favour by every means in my poor power—you will not hear me, Edward; you are deaf and blind as regards that evil man; and nothing now is left for me, but to weep and pray in solitude and silence—to pray for you, my own dear and beloved husband, that God may lead you to see the error of your ways, and conduct you again into the right path!"

Edward kissed her brow, as it rested on her hands, in silence, and almost with the love of by-gone days. That religion which he had once considered her brightest ornament, he now called "the weak point of her character," and thought he was doing what was very praiseworthy in bearing with it so quietly. He immediately wrote to some friends in Scotland, about Jessy, and applied to the nearest magistrate to know what means it would be necessary to adopt to trace out the lost and unfortunate girl. Hinton protested he knew nothing of the matter—swore by all that was sacred he had never heard from her since she left the Mossaits—but failed in convincing Agnes of the truth of one word he uttered.

"You have studied the character of St. Thomas, at all events," said her husband, in a sneering tone, "and taken a lesson in unbelief."

"If I could find out what it is that Hinton believes in, and he would swear by it, then I might believe *him*," replied Agnes, mildly.

Day after day, week after week, passed, and no tidings came of the lost Jessy. Much did Agnes wish that the wandering girl, whose mysterious prophecy seemed rapidly fulfilling, would again flit across her path; and often did she watch the highway, hoping yet dreading that the tattered cloak and light form of the strange being might issue from it towards Mossaits. Although Edward was more and more estranged from his home, he thought it necessary to apologize occasionally to Agnes for his absence: ill at ease with himself, he could not be expected to be kindly towards others; and she felt how very bitter it is to be obliged to take the cold leaden coin of civility, in lieu of

the pure and glowing gold of warm affection. It is utterly impossible to describe how the alteration in a cherished and beloved object affects her who loves more fondly and fervently, after years of union, than she did when, like the most admirable of Shakspeare's heroines, she bestowed herself at the holy altar to the one being almost of her idolatry, wishing—

“That *only* to stand high on *his* account
She might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,
 Exceed account.”

How quickly does the ear note if the voice be not as tender as in former days! To father—mother—friends—all may seem unchanged; but the wife, who has dwelt upon every look—who knows, as it were, even the number of rays which the beloved eye throws forth—painfully sees and feels the difference. The *words*, perchance, may be as kind; but their *tone* is altered. What boots it to her if the universe views her with admiration—if the wealth of nations be piled at her feet! *He is changed!* That consciousness is the sword which, hanging by a single hair, threatens, sooner or later, her destruction, and prevents her enjoying any earthly happiness or repose. Not only Edward, however, but circumstances, were also altering at the Moss pits. The disturbed state of the country made each person suspicious of the other; and, as the winter advanced, so did distress progress. In the neighbouring districts workmen of all trades had refused to take employment without increased wages: not a night passed but cattle were destroyed, or outhouses, and in some instances dwellings, burned to the ground. Landlords knew not which of their tenants to confide in; and the misery was increased by soldiers being frequently distributed and stationed where the people absolutely lacked the means of supporting themselves. It was pretty generally rumoured that Hinton was concerned in these transactions, though no one exactly knew how. He was the principal leader of a debating-society in Mondrich, which had the misfortune to attract the attention of the magistrate, who sought to put it down perhaps by measures that might have been called violent. Be that as it may, he succeeded; and it formed a most desirable theme for the disaffected to dwell upon. Hoskins grumbled incessantly at the magistrate's “illegal” proceedings; and Agnes combated his arguments, or rather his opinions, in vain. Christmas, that trystingtime which generally brings an interchange of kindness and social feeling among all classes of society, had come; and a little episode, that occurred at Moss pits, will at once show the state of feeling of both husband and wife.

They had been in the habit of exchanging presents, during preceding years, on Christmas-day, each anxious to surprise the other with some more peculiar gift. Christmas eve, Edward did not return until the village clock had chimed eleven, and then he went sullenly to bed, without heeding the little preparations that Agnes was making for the approaching festival. She was alone; for, finding that her husband's habits prevented him from bringing home the produce of his earnings, she had wisely parted with her little servant, considering it was better to labour with her own hands than to incur debt. "And," said she meekly, when communing with her own thoughts, "if *he will* be extravagant, the more necessity is there for my being economical."

Hoskins was awakened the next morning by the sweet kisses of his boy, while his wife, leaning over his bedside, prayed that he might enjoy many happy returns of that holy day.

"Say *we*, Agnes," interrupted Edward, "say *we*. God knows, whatever happiness I enjoy, *you* ought to share; for I make you miserable enough at times. Will you forgive me?"

The words were spoken in the tone that Agnes so loved, and, unable to sustain her feelings, she flung herself upon her husband's bosom, and burst into tears.

When Edward, dressed in his best suit, was preparing to go to the Manor, his wife laid her hand on his arm, and, encouraged by his kindness, in the gentlest manner requested him to read one, only one, chapter to her, before he went out—it would not take him five minutes. He complied with a tolerable grace; and, when he finished, she took a small heart-shaped brooch from her bosom, and, telling him that it contained their child's hair, fastened it in his shirt.

"You did not forget, Agnes, though I did," said he; "but I will bring you something from Mondrich, where I must go after I leave the Manor; and I will be back to dinner at two, and remain with you all the evening."

Edward returned at the appointed time, but a cloud was on his brow; he hardly partook of the dinner she had prepared, and had forgotten the customary token. As the evening was closing over a cold and snowy landscape, "Agnes," he said, "I must go: I thought I could have spent all this day with you, but something has occurred which must prevent it. I will, however, return early, and do more justice to your excellent cheer at supper, than I have been able to do at dinner."

Never had his wife felt it so difficult to part from him. She requested, intreated; and for a long time his child clasped its hands round his neck, and hung by his knees even as he ap-

proached the door. His departing footsteps smote heavily on the heart of the affectionate Agnes, and, as the last echo died upon her ear, she wept.

When eight o'clock came she looked from the window; but the fog was so intense that she could see nothing save the fantastic boughs of the old oak, looking more like deepened shadows of darkness than separate or distinct objects. The song and cheerful laugh rang from two of the neighbouring cottages; and at a third there was an assembly of dancing rustics. Agnes thought it was the first time the happiness of others had increased her misery, and she blamed herself for the selfish feeling. Nine, ten, eleven, twelve!—Christmas-day had ended, the revellers had sought their homes, and no sound was heard save the rushing of the storm amid the branches, whose outlines were now lost in midnight obscurity. It would seem that the ancient of days sturdily withstood the tempest, and groaned heavily from the exertion; the old rooks, who had made it their habitation for ages, cawed their complainings whenever the sweeping of the mighty blast passed on, as if to remonstrate with the mysterious power that disturbed their repose. She stood at the little window, and pressed her forehead against the glass, that its coolness might be imparted to her burning brow. Suddenly she thought she perceived streaks of light, or rather (so deeply coloured were they) of flame, intersecting the darkness, and gradually illuminating the distant sky. Before she had time to draw any conclusion from so singular an appearance, she started back with horror on observing, so close that she almost fancied it touched her cheek, a thin, shadowy hand, with the forefinger curved, as if beckoning her forward. Despite her self-possession, she trembled violently, and could hardly prevent herself from shrieking aloud, when she saw distinctly a white, ghastly face pressed to the glass that separated her from this untimely visitor. A sort of hissing and exulting whisper now came upon her ear. “Don’t you know me, Agnes Hoskins?—don’t you remember Lady Jane? Come, come with me, and see how bright the Manor is this gay Christmas night!” A horrid suspicion—too horrid to be entertained—flashed across her mind, as Agnes undid the door; and, before the half-crazed girl entered, she had sunk upon a chair, and with difficulty retained her seat. For a few moments she could not think; and the half-maniac, with that feeling of sympathy which rarely deserts a woman, looked mournfully into her face. At length her eye rested on a flagon of elderberry-wine that stood upon the table with the untasted supper; she poured out a large glass of it, and, curtsying with mock so-

lemnity to the trembling Agnes, said, before she drank it off, "Health to you, my lady, and a merry Christmas!—a cellar full, a byre full, and plenty of faggots! See, see! they blaze—they blaze!" she continued, pointing to the sky, that was reddening higher and higher. "Come with me, and I'll tell you as we go how that will be the last fire Harry will light for many a day! He must have other darlings, indeed!—but *now* he can have only me, for none of his dainty dames will follow him into strange lands—none but poor Jane! The police have him by this time, and Hoskins too; so you'd better go and bring them all home to supper!"

"Woman!" exclaimed Agnes, springing as in mortal agony from her chair, "what do you say?—Hoskins—my Edward—my husband there—at the burning of Wallingford Manor!" She seized the girl fiercely by the arm, but suddenly her grasp relaxed, and she fell stiff and cold to the earth. How long she remained there she was perfectly unconscious; but, when she recovered, her frame felt paralyzed, the air was bitter and piercing, the light was extinguished, and all around was utterly, utterly desolate. It was some time ere she was restored to the recollection of what she had heard, and it was still longer before she recovered sufficiently to be able to move, or settle upon any plan of action. The very ticking of the clock—that gentle, domestic sound—struck heavily and painfully upon her brain; and, when it gave warning that another hour had passed into eternity, she could hardly believe the sense was correct which counted four. She endeavoured to compose her mind by supplication, and the Lord's Prayer occurred to her at once. She repeated the words, until she arrived at the sentence—"Deliver us from evil," when the full consciousness of the evil that was suspended over their devoted heads prevented her finishing the holy and beautiful intercession. She arose from her knees, and groped about until she procured a light. She then endeavoured to arrange her plans. Her very soul recoiled from the dreadful idea that Hoskins had any thing to do at the burning which had but a little while past streaked the everlasting sky with tokens of the wickedness of man. The heavens were still as intensely black as when first she had pressed her burning brow against the small panes of the cottage-window, and looked earnestly and hopefully for him with whom her heart perpetually dwelt.

While she paused, and paused, she heard the sound of distant voices; footsteps approached—not her husband's. Her breath came short and thick, and, instead of passing from between her unclosed lips, seemed to encrust itself upon her tongue

and forbid the power of utterance. Men—strangers, entered ; one she had seen—known—the sergeant of police. He respectfully removed his hat, “hoped that Mrs. Hoskins would forgive him for doing his duty.” If salvation had depended on it, she could not speak ; but she looked into his face with so despairing, so imploring a gaze, that the man turned from her, with more emotion than could be expected from one who had often witnessed distress in so many forms. When at last she was enabled to ask a few questions, the answers she received confirmed her worst fears. “The out-offices of Wallingford Manor had been set on fire ; Hoskins, Hinton, and a pedlar of the name of Paul Dodder, had been found on the spot ; and,” added the man, “the Manor itself must have taken fire had we not received intimation immediately after it was kindled—long before there was any appearance to indicate such rapid destruction.”

The party then proceeded to search the cottage, but found nothing which they considered necessary to remove. “Matters may turn out better than you think for,” said the man kindly. “Can I take any message to your husband?—it may comfort him, for he seemed sadly put out—stupified like.”

“I will go!—no—my child—I will—I must wait till morning ! Tell him—my blessing—and I will be with him to-morrow. I shall find him, I suppose, in the—” Gaol, she would have said, but could not utter the hateful word.

The man understood her, and replied “Yes,”—the monosyllable of hope, but, in this instance, the herald of despair. They then departed, and went to Hinton’s dwelling, where they remained much longer. The sergeant, with real good feeling, knocked at the door of a respectable resident at Moss-pits, whom he knew was esteemed by Agnes—told her the circumstances—and the woman needed no further intimation to hasten to one whom she both loved and respected.

When she entered the cottage, Agnes was weeping bitterly over her unconscious boy, who despite her loud sobbings, slept as calmly as if the very breath of happiness had hushed his slumbers. She extended her hand to Mrs. Lee, and said, in broken and hardly audible tones, “They will point at that innocent child when we are both dead, and call him, in bitter mockery, the orphan of the house-burner ! And who has brought this bitterness upon us ? Pray for me, Mrs. Lee, pray for me!—I cannot pray for myself now ! Oh, that God in his mercy had left us childless, and then I might have borne it ! Wicked that I am ! Will he not be, perhaps, the only thing on earth left me to love, when—when—” She pressed her hands firmly on her temples, and her friend almost feared that the

violence of her grief would destroy her reason. The feelings that had long been pent up within her own bosom had at last vented themselves both in words and tears, and before nine o'clock she had apparently regained much of her usual serenity. She dressed her child, who added unconsciously to her misery by perpetually enquiring for "papa," and placing a cup and chair for him before the untasted breakfast. She then summoned resolution to change her dress; and, tying a cottage-bonnet closely over her face, proceeded with a sorrowing heart towards Mondrich.

Mrs. Lee kindly took charge of the little boy; and, to do justice to the inhabitants of the cottages, not one but saluted her kindly and respectfully as she passed.

"Poor thing!" said Mrs. Lee, "she has borne a great deal lately; she looks now ten years older than she did this time twelvemonths."

"I am truly sorry for her," responded Miss Nancy Carter, famous for clear-starching and scandal, who had come on purpose to Moss pits to find out, as she expressed it, "the truth of every thing." "I'm truly sorry for her; but she always carried her head very high, as if she were better than a servant, forsooth! I'm *very* sorry for her, for all that!"

"So you ought to be, Miss Nancy, for she sent you plenty of black-currant jelly when you had a sore throat, last winter," observed Mrs. Lee.

"Do you think poor Hoskins will get off with transportation?" persisted Nancy.

"I could never think him guilty of setting fire to Wallingford Manor, for one," replied the kindhearted Mrs. Lee. "He was on the spot, I suppose, or they could not have taken him there; but I am certain it was to save, not to destroy."

"Well, time will tell," said the gossip, who, finding that Mrs. Lee was charitably given, thought she would seek some "kindred soul" with which to communicate: "Time will tell;—only what did he want with seven fire brands, tied in red tape, a cask of powder, and three mould candles? You may smile if you please, Mrs. Lee, but it's true, every word of it! Three mould candles, with the ends scorched, and a quarter of a pound of wax-ends! I had it from the very best authority, for I'd scorn to say any thing without a good foundation!" and off walked Miss Nancy Carter.

It would be impossible to describe the feelings with which Agnes entered that abode of misery called a county gaol. Snow and ice had accumulated in a little court she had to cross, to such a degree that she could hardly extricate her feet from

the humid mass. As the rusty key turned in its lock, she clung to the slimy walls for support; and, when the door was thrown open, she had scarcely power to crawl into the dismal cell where her husband was confined. Hoskins sat upon a low bed, which evidently had not been discomposed, his elbows resting upon his knees, and his face buried in his hands. Agnes could not speak, but she sat down by his side, and, passing her arm round his neck, endeavoured to draw his head so as to rest it on her bosom. He shrank from the touch, and a low and bitter groan was the only reply to her caresses.

“Keep a good heart, measter,” said the gaoler, “keep a good heart, and it may all go well. Bless ye! Measter Hinton doesn’t get on so, but has taken something to keep life in him.”

No answer was returned to this consolatory speech, and the man left them, observing that they must not remain more than two hours together.

Not many, but kind and tranquillizing, were the words which this admirable woman breathed into her husband’s ear. She kissed his cold and clammy hands, and tried, though in vain, to prevail upon him to taste of the refreshments she had not forgotten to bring with her. For a length of time she obtained no word from his lips; and at last she sat silently gazing on him—as the mariner who looks upon a rock close to his native home, where he sported in infancy, and formed his plans of future greatness, but which, on his return from a long and prosperous voyage, with the harbour in view, had wrecked his vessel, and consigned his all to destruction! Silence is the nurse of sorrow: Agnes would have given worlds to have heard the sound of his voice: and, when at last he did speak, its tone was so fearfully changed—so hollow, so agonized—that she could hardly believe it to be that of her own Edward.

“I deserve this, and worse, Agnes,” he said, “for I have cast the blessing of the Almighty far from me. And you, who ought to curse me, to find you thus! Do not touch me, Agnes! I could bear your reproaches; but your kindness scorches my very heart. Yet, Agnes, I solemnly call God to witness, that I am innocent of any participation in the burning at Wallingford-Manor. I cannot now dwell upon it; but, as you have borne much, bear yet a little more—bear with my silence; but believe me innocent of any participation in that crime. However I may be otherwise guilty—however despicable—I repeat that I had nothing to do with the burning at Wallingford.”

How sweet and how natural it is to believe in the innocence of those we love? Although Agnes well remembered the fearful habit of falsehood which her husband had contracted—although he had so often deceived her—yet she clung to the belief that he was guiltless, and blessed God for it, as though it were an established fact in the eyes of those judges before whom he was shortly to appear as a fettered culprit, whose life only might appease the offended laws of his country.

“Would to God it were come—that dreaded, dreadful day!” she murmured, in her cottage-solitude.

It was now nearly three weeks since her first interview with her husband; a slow, consuming fever had been preying upon her strength, and utterly prevented her using the smallest exertion, or crawling to his prison. The kind neighbour, Mrs. Lee, undertook to visit him daily, and to see that his wants were cared for; the little boy was often her companion.

“Thank God!” said his poor mother, kissing his rosy cheek, “thank God that he is too young to remember his father in a prison! Were he even a year older, its memory might dwell upon his mind and wither his young spirit within him.”

It was early in the month of February, and still she had been unable to reach Mondrich, although nearly every day the physician described her as growing better. The clergyman’s visits afforded her much consolation, particularly as he told her how completely and truly penitent her husband was: this, with the assurance, repeated in every communication she received from him, of his perfect innocence, made her hope for the best, though how that innocence was to be proved remained a mystery!

Mrs. Lee had taken her boy out one day, earlier than usual, to see Mrs. Middleton; and as Agnes looked forth on the clear cold morning, she fancied she felt stronger than she had been for a long time. The crisp hoar-frost hung in fantastic forms on the young shoots of the early budding trees. The robin hopped among the lower branches of the oak, and, seeing the hand resting on the window where it had been so often fed, flew to the sill, and fearlessly pecked the crumbs she threw to her little dependent. The air, she thought, was almost fragrant; and, ere the casement was closed, she had resolved to exert her strength, and walk as far as the stile that divided the Mondrich meadows. She sat for a few moments on the step; and, urged by the eager desire again to see her husband, after a little consideration, determined to reach the town. She walked better than she anticipated; and felt much pleasure at perceiving that now but one field separated her from the turn

that led directly to the prison. Suddenly she became rooted to the earth; her features assumed the rigidity and colour of death; and she cast off the bonnet, which had been tied on so firmly, to catch every note of the awakening sound that passed over the town. Again!—was it a dream?—or could it be really the trumpet—the awful trumpet that heralds the approach of him who is to sit in judgment on the crimes of his fellow-beings!

“It is come!—it is come!” she exclaimed, “the day—the very hour of his trial, and they told me not of it! Father of Mercy!”—and as she spoke she sank on the ice-bound and crackling grass, and stretched forth her white attenuated arms towards heaven—“Father of Mercy! remember mercy, for the sake of thy blessed Son! Mercy!—mercy!—mercy! Lord this cup may not pass away; but crush me not utterly in this dreadful moment! Mercy! mercy! O my God!”

The trumpet sound had ceased, and the bustle of the county-court subsided, when Agnes Hoskins—her mantle shrouding her entire figure, and its hood held closely round her face, glided, almost like a spectre, into a corner nearest the dock, where the three prisoners stood arraigned for trial. With tender care for the feelings of him she loved, she concealed herself effectually from his sight; knowing that it would increase his misery to see her there. To the indictment they all pleaded “not guilty;” but Edward Hoskins laid his hand on his heart, and looking firmly in the judge’s face, added, in a low impressive tone, “so help me, God!” The bearing of the unfortunate culprits was strongly contrasted: Paul Dodder’s chin had sunk on his breast, and he looked down with the sullen expression of one who knew the worst was come, and cared not for it. Harry Hinton had thrown back the light and glowing curls that crowded over his brow, and his eye seemed enlarged by the bold front he carried; his features were high and regular; and the unobserving would have imagined the firmness with which he regarded, and even analyzed, the countenances of his judges, little betokened the hardihood of guilt. Edward Hoskins stood as a sorrowful and heart-stricken man—ashamed of his offences, yet confident that he was *not* guilty of this particular crime. His suit of solemn black seemed still more dismal beside the smart blue coat and light waistcoat in which his unabashed companion was arrayed. The first person examined was the police-sergeant by whom the prisoners had been taken into custody. The counsel for the crown, who, as usual, scented the blood afar off, lost no opportunity, in his opening speech, of stating

the worst, and dwelt particularly on Hoskins's ingratitude to Mrs. Cecil Wallingford; while the counsel for the prisoners seemed equally anxious to foil his brother, and, if possible, make a way for his clients to escape.

The sergeant deposed to his finding Dodder and Hinton close to the burning barn: the latter, when first he saw him, was on his knees, in the very act of blowing the flame; the other held a quantity of combustibles, (which he described,) and was laying a train to communicate with the stables. Hoskins, he said, was near the spot, but made no attempt to escape. This statement went so clearly against the prisoners that the jury looked at each other, as much as to say, "What need we of further witness?" One of the police confirmed all that the other had stated; and at every word they uttered Agnes felt her heart beat slowly, and still more slowly, until, at last, she scarcely breathed or lived.

"The case, my lord, against those unhappy men seems so fully made out," said the counsel for the crown, addressing the bench, "that I need hardly trouble the court with the examination of other witnesses; unless, indeed, the jury require it."

"My lord," observed the prisoners' counsel, "I particularly wish that a girl of the name of Jane Hoole be called up: much depends upon her evidence."

"My learned brother has chosen a strange person," replied the senior barrister, "I was anxious to spare the feelings of his clients; but, by all means, let Jane Hoole be brought forward."

All eyes were turned upon the wild fantastic girl who now ascended the witness box. Her rich golden hair had been curled and arranged with much attention; her pallid cheeks were tinted by that fearful, but beautiful, hue which too truly indicates consumption, and her deep blue eyes were of a dazzling and wandering brightness; her dress was of faded silk, and a wide red sash girdled a figure of light and elegant proportions. She seemed much terrified, and trembled violently.

"The prisoner, Hinton, intimidates our witness, my lord," observed the counsel; and a shudder passed over those who saw the expression with which he regarded the unfortunate victim of his wickedness.

"Let Henry Hinton stand down," said the judge. After a little time the poor creature seemed at ease, and collected; Agnes, who had been roused by her appearance, thought she was a much more rational being than she had imagined during their former brief meetings.

"You know the prisoners at the bar?" commenced the counsel.

“I do, Sir.”

After a little more questioning, the rod was presented to her, and she was directed to place it on the heads of those who were present at the burning at Wallingford Manor. With a trembling hand she let it descend on the heads of Hinton and Dodder, then held it for a moment or two suspended over Hoskins, and, after some consideration, was about to return it to the officer.

“Where only these two men present?” enquired the counsel, while a thrill and murmur of mingled quality passed through the court-house.

“Though I am only a poor half-witted creature,” said the girl, looking round with an imploring air, “I want to tell the truth, which I will if you let me do it in my own way. He was there in body but not in *spirit*; don’t you see the difference? He didn’t mean to be there for harm;—he was there for good. But let me go on my own way, and then you’ll understand me.”

She then, in wandering but simple language, stated that Harry Hinton had often employed her to procure materials for various burnings, and that she did as he desired, “for the love that warmed her heart towards him. That he often promised to marry her, but that the fancy he took to Jessy, had, she knew, prevented it; and so she thought, if he was once to be sent beyond the seas, she would follow him, and have him all her own. He always promised to give Jessy up; but she found that he had got her back from Scotland, after her sister had sent her there, and resolved to punish him for his infidelity by telling the police, which she had done; and she hoped, now she had told their lordships the truth, they would send Jessy far, far away, and make Harry marry her at once: she would go with him any where—that she would—for she loved him with all her heart.

A great portion of this was unintelligible to both judge and jury; but the witness evidently interested them; and though the counsel frequently interrupted her, saying, that what she stated had nothing to do with the transaction, yet they were obliged to let her go on her own way, as the only chance of getting at the truth. As to Hoskins, “he certainly was,” she said, “at Wallingford, but not to burn it.” It was in vain that the counsel for the crown declared that hearsay evidence should not be received;—the judge was of opinion that she ought to be permitted to go on; and the counsel for the crown resigned her to the cross-examination of the counsel for the prisoner.

“You have stated, young woman, that Edward Hoskins did

not aid and abet in the burning which took place on the night of the twenty-fifth of December."

"I have, Sir. I was up in the loft where they met, and when he found out what they were after he prayed and begged them not to go on; and then my Harry made like to give it up—and Hoskins went home, as we thought, for my Harry sent me down to the Manor with the chips for burning, and promised to come after; but, at the Manor, dark as it was, I saw Hoskins, who let himself in with a private key to the out-places, examining and looking about as if to see all safe. And I wondered what kept Harry away, and went back; and on the road I met Dodder, and a little behind I saw Harry—my Harry, talking to the girl I hated; and I made up my mind to tell that minute and bring the police to them; and, meeting one, I gave him a hint, and returned to the out-house, at Wallingford; and there was Hoskins and Harry quarrelling, and one reproached the other—and Edward Hoskins thought to put out the fire—and I was sorry when Harry struck him; and then Paul Dodder went on lighting the fire that Edward tried to put out—and was like one frantic, and Harry and him struggled hard, and came so near the spot where I was crouching, that I ran off to tell Agnes Hoskins of it, and saw the police coming—and she can tell you," continued the girl, turning round to the spot where Agnes had fancied herself perfectly concealed—"there is Mrs. Hoskins. I dare say she remembers what I said."

Edward Hoskins sprang to the side of the dock, and, for a moment forgetting the propriety he had hitherto maintained, shook the bars violently, and, finding that he could not escape to her side, exclaimed, "Support, support her!—will no one look to her!—she is fainting!" But she did not faint—she approached the bar with a blanched cheek, but a step of almost supernatural firmness, and, passing her thin, cold hand through the aperture, rested her clear blue eyes upon the jury; and in a low voice, which, notwithstanding its weakness, was so earnest as to be heard in every corner of the court—

"Forgive, gentlemen," she said, "a wife's presuming to remind you that more than one life hangs upon your verdict; and"—she was interrupted by a scream, so wild and piercing that every eye was again turned to the witness-box, from whence it came.

"There—there—there she is!" exclaimed Jane Hoole. "She has followed him even here to take him from me. But you will not let her!" She leaped down the steps, and in an instant, before the officers had time to interpose, she had torn

off a cloak and hat, in which the unfortunate Jessy Grey had endeavoured to enshroud herself; but which could not deceive her lynx-eyed rival. "Here she is, my Lord!—here she is! Agnes Hoskins, I will trust her to you," she continued, dragging her forward. Agnes did not see the deceiving and degraded sister. She only beheld the child of her father's old age—the girl she had loved with a mother's tenderness, and cherished with a mother's care. Turning from the dock, she opened her arms, but Jessy fell at her feet and hid her face on the earth. It was in vain that order was endeavoured to be restored. Agnes Hoskins and her virtues were known to every individual in the court. Husbands had often pointed her out to their wives as a model of virtue and propriety—fathers had wished for such a daughter, and young men for such a partner. And as she stood struggling with emotion, and caressing the poor lost creature, who twined around her with all the contrite feeling of an humbled sinner, the judge waited patiently till the feelings that had thus agitated every member of the assembly should subside.

"I have made one effort, Agnes, to repair my many crimes," whispered Jessy to her sister: "I have no evidence to offer in favour of *him*; but I believe I can confirm the statement just made by that unhappy girl, as to your Edward's innocence." This information was conveyed to the counsel for the prisoners; and, as the poor changed creature was about to ascend the box, Agnes threw her own cloak over her shoulders, to conceal a form that called a crimson blush to her faded cheek. Her quiet and distinct account of the transaction fully corroborated what the wild girl had sworn to. Unknown to her deceiver, she had witnessed the quarrel which took place between them on that awful night; and had wandered over the country ever since, "seeking rest but finding none"—not daring to pollute her sister's cottage with her presence, and resolved not to visit the author of her misery, lest he might alter the fixed purpose of her soul—that of appearing at her brother-in-law's trial to testify his innocence. She was supported down the steps, and clung to her sister's shoulder during the jury's deliberation. Without leaving the box, they returned a verdict of guilty against Hinton and Dodder, and acquitted Edward Hoskins. Agnes might well be excused for forgetting Jessy's feelings in the overwhelming gratitude she experienced for the preservation of her husband's life. So completely were her ears closed by a new sensation of joyfulness and hope, that overflowed as it were all her senses, that she hardly understood, when the judge had absolutely pronounced sentence

of death on his wretched companions, the meaning of his words. One of Jane Hoole's frightful shrieks aroused her from those visions of returning happiness which flitted around her.

"Death!—not death—not death for Harry!" vociferated the maddened creature: "it is transportation—not death!—you won't kill him!" At the same instant Agnes felt the grasp that her sister had so firmly fixed on her arm, relax; she looked upon her—her hands were stretched towards the dock; and as her gaze rested upon Harry Hinton's face, which was turned towards her, those beautiful eyes grew yet more dim; her livid lips parted over her white and glistening teeth; and, with a frightful convulsion, the ardent, misguided spirit of Jessie Grey, passed from its earthly dwelling!

* * * * *

Months and years have gone by—the Mosspits are quiet and beautiful as ever—but the curate of the parish, a mild and benevolent young man, dwells in the cottage that had once been gladdened by the presence of the excellent Agnes. She had passed with her small household to another land, where we will for a moment follow—it is even in the new world; and there, in a well-built dwelling, on the borders of a green savannah, is the final resting-place of Edward Hoskins and his now numerous family.

The sun is setting behind the dense and magnificent woods that seem to mount even to the heavens; and its parting rays linger, as if loath to part from the richly-cultivated corn and meadow-land that surrounds his house. There, literally, under the shadow of their own vine and fig-tree, is this once more happy family assembled.

"And will you never return to England, father?" demanded the first-born, as he carefully examined the contents of a huge chest that had just arrived from Europe.

His mother replied, "Could we be happier there than we are here?"

Her husband thanked her with a look that told of gratitude unspeakable; and when the group had separated, and only Edward and his cherished wife remained to enjoy the deep tranquillity of the balmy twilight, he disturbed the meditation, which the question had occasioned, by the utterance of a natural but painful idea. "If our children should ever go to England, Agnes, they would hear a sad story of their father; but they would hear also of their mother's virtue: had you been unkind—had you even been what the world calls just to yourself, I should have been a banned and a blighted man, but you did—"

“Only what every woman, who truly loves her husband, would do,” interrupted the unchanging Agnes. “And, behold, the Lord has been not only merciful but bountiful;—the treasures bestowed upon us on earth (she pointed to their children, who were assembling for evening worship within the porch) can only be exceeded by the treasures appointed for humble believers in heaven.”

LOST BEAUTY.

The Trials of Lady Leslie.

Claude. And is it nothing but a dialogue?

Mudy. In truth, no more; except that to the end

A little tale is fastened.

Claude. To pin morality to?

Mudy. No, Sir. To help morality to mount still higher.

OLD PLAY.

IN the saloon of a large and antique house, of the Elizabethan era, two ladies were seated, enjoying the cool evening breeze that entered through an open window. The dwelling had been altered and re-altered, to meet the tastes and improvements of the various masters into whose hands it had passed from century to century. Here and there fragments of turrets were propped up by modern buttresses, the modern and the antique appearing in perfect contrast; one beautiful arch still marked the old entrance-gate. The former strength of the place was intimated by the remains of a moat, now nearly filled with rubbish and portions of broken and mouldering stone, from which the flaunting wall-flower, and various creeping plants, sprang up, and mocked at the decay—which, alas, poor blossoms! was soon to render them far more contemptible than that over which they triumphed. The windows of Leslie Abbey—for so was the dwelling called—were of every order, and every size—from the small loop holes to the spacious and modern French casements, that led out upon a lawn of matchless colour and beauty.

It was near one of these the ladies were seated: and if we do not longer descant upon the richness and variety of the landscape, the extent of the wood, whose dark girdle of mingled oak and platanas clasped the green meadows, and sha-

dowed the river that wandered and murmured beneath its protecting foliage, it is because we admire the living more than the material world, and would make acquaintance with that noble-looking woman whose countenance is turned towards the setting sun, and whose every attitude expresses dignity. How firmly, yet how gracefully, her head is raised above her polished shoulders! What richness, yet propriety, in her dress!—the folds of her velvet robe descend to her feet, that—so delicate are their form—hardly indent the crimson cushion with their slight pressure. Her companion is of other, though it may be, of more winning beauty. The childish golden hair, that clusters over her expansive brow in such redundancy of freedom, harmonizes well with the cheek of palest rose, and a form that, we could imagine, might rest upon a bed of violets without crushing a single petal.

Her voice is like the breathing of a soft lyre, when awakened by the spirit of joy; her blue eyes are full of hope—that perfectly unsaddened hope which dwells with youth as a companion, and calls innocence its sister.

They are both children of the same parents, though many years passed before Annette was born to be the playmate and friend of the stately Lady Leslie.

As they sat together in that great chamber, there was a feeling of quiet and solitude around them which darkened the shadows on Lady Leslie's mind, and sobered the smile on the lip of her gay young sister. They had both recently suffered from that fell disease which has been the bane of so much beauty. But, while Annette escaped unscathed, the blight had fallen upon her sister, and the mistress of Leslie Abbey arose from her bed with the marks of the pestilence written on her once beautiful countenance too strongly to be ever effaced.

It is not to be denied that the noble lady had as large a portion of personal vanity as usually falls to the lot of woman. Of high birth, and large possessions, she had consequently a sufficient number of flatterers to praise and fawn. Had she been as dark as Erebus, and as deformed as sin, they would still have sung of and praised her loveliness. But its character and brilliancy had been such that she could not move without receiving the homage of eyes—so rarely paid without being sensibly felt, and duly appreciated. She had been fêted and sung, painted and sculptured, until her exquisite head whirled upon its pedestal, and, what was still worse, her heart, naturally kind and benevolent, became careless of the wants or wishes of her fellow-creatures. Prosperity drives pity from the bosoms of the wealthy: it is good to feel disappoint-

ment, and even adversity, at some period of our lives; for practical experience is a benefit to ourselves and others. It was Lady Leslie's beauty that steeled her heart; she thought of it—acted upon it—dreamed of it. It had gained her the affections of the only man she ever loved. One whom wealth and title could not purchase was nevertheless caught by the matchless face—that now!—but she could not bear to think of it. To look upon it a second time, thus scarred and disfigured, was impossible! Her husband had been abroad; and the letter, which lay open on her lap, told of his hopes of an immediate return; and spoke much of anticipated happiness in meeting again (so ran the words) “with his bright and beautiful wife.”

Annette had watched, with all the earnestness and anxiety of her affectionate nature, the effect produced by the perusal of that letter upon her sister's mind. She had longed for the return of her brother; for she felt that now was the time, when Lady Leslie's proud spirit was bowed by mortification, to lead her from the vanity of her ways, and teach her to mount far, far above the world's mean and sordid enjoyments. “Why should such as she,” thought Annette, “trifle away the essence and energy of soul, that God has given her, upon those whose wonder is cankered by envy—and to whose lips blessings are unknown! Her heart is touched and softened by affliction; she valued the casket more than the jewel it contained—for she lived among those who could appreciate the first, but not the last; the roses of her cheek were more lovely in her sight than the blossoms of her mind, that would have furnished forth such glorious fruit, had the one been cultivated with half the care bestowed upon the other. But it is not too late; she is yet in the summer of her days; and who knows that, if Leslie comes not, it may be given to me—to me, her youngest and unworthy sister—to show her better things. When the old Roman soldier was blind, he was led by a stripling boy—as one child would lead another: not that the old man was less wise than before, but he wanted sight, and the youth lent him the only faculty he lacked. On the same principle, may not I give unto her, who is ten times greater than myself, the one quality she needs,—the only one that I possess, and so render her loss a gain?” Having thought so much, Annette looked into Lady Leslie's face; it retained the traces of recent tears, and was more than usually pale. “I will not speak yet,” thought her sister; and, without saying a word, she took her lute, and, striking a few wild chords, began that beautiful song of the witty and accomplished Carew:—

“ He that loves a rosy cheek,
 Or a coral lip admires,
 Or from star-like eyes doth seek
 Fuel to maintain his fires—
 As old Time makes these decay
 So his flames must waste away,”

She paused, for a moment, at the conclusion of the first verse, and stole a quiet glance at her companion; but there was no expression that could induce her either to continue or forbear another stanza. She again sung:—

“ But a smooth and steadfast mind,
 Gentle thoughts and calm desires,
 Hearts with equal love combined,
 Kindle never-dying fires:
 Where these are not, I despise
 Lovely cheeks, or lips, or eyes.”

“ You are fond of the lays of the olden time,” said Leslie with a sigh; but I care not for either the modern or the ancient rhymsters: why should I care for any thing, when nothing cares for me?”

“ If you care for nothing, dear sister, that same nothing shows marvellous wisdom in caring for you. I wish I could imitate it! But will you not read me Leslie’s letter?” she continued; “ or, at least, tell me what he says? Here have I sat, the perfect picture of maidenly patience, singing and sighing, from fair curiosity to know what writes my lordly brother.”

“ O, you may see it all!—but stay, I will read you this passage myself!—

“ ‘ Since you have so long enriched the abbey with your presence, I fear I can hardly hope you will continue there after my return: tell me, dearest, do you not pant for the court, of which your beauty was so bright an ornament?’

“ You hear, Annette,” continued the proud lady, rising from her seat, and pacing the apartment with the grace of a Mary, and the irritation of an Elizabeth: “ You hear!—Did he know of the evil I have suffered, it would be ill talking of beauty; perhaps he would not think of returning.”

“ And have you not told him, then?”

“ Told him, Annette! O, no; silly girl! Do you think I did not want to see him once more! Him I have so loved!—But your childish nature cannot understand such love: you love linnets, and doves, and wild roses, and—”

“ You, sister!”

“ Forgive me, Annette, forgive me!” said Lady Leslie, with one of those sudden transitions of temper to which petted men,

women, and children, are so often subject: "Some allowance would be made for a king who had lost his crown—for a—"

"You have not lost your crown. It is now my turn to be forgiven, for again interrupting you. I have read of a virtuous woman being a crown of glory to her husband; and do you know what I fancy should be a married woman's crown?—Her husband's love."

"Granted; my husband's love was what I prized on earth—more than earth's—all earth's other treasures;—it is for him I would be beautiful!"

"My dear sister!"

"What mean ye, girl?" enquired Lady Leslie, with returning haughtiness of manner.

"That you deceive yourself: I grant he was your principal, but not your *only*, object. Admiration was your food—your existence depended on it! If he were not present to give the necessary supply, you took it from other hands. Nay, do not look so sternly on me. I own that from him it was *sweeter* than from any; but, sister, it was sweet from all."

Lady Leslie gazed upon her young sister with astonishment. She had only considered her an affectionate kind girl; she had not sought to penetrate her character; vain people seldom care for others sufficiently to scrutinize their minds. And now, astonishment at her boldness was blended with veneration for her truth. Annette continued—"If my beloved sister would throw open the rich storehouse of her mind, and cultivate the affections of her heart, she would be more beloved than ever by her husband, and command the respect—if, indeed, it be worth commanding—of those who flattered; and, better still, of those who never soiled their lips by flattery or falsehood."

"Annette Feversham, the philosopher!" exclaimed the lady, contemptuously.

"Annette Feversham, the naturalist, if you will!" replied her sister, playfully: "May I tell you a little tale? it is very short, and very true. You know that when you were engaged in the business of fashionable life, your boy was turned over to his childish aunt, as companions well suited to each other. Well, sister, I have learned from children more wisdom, more of that natural wisdom which comes direct from God, than I ever learned from men. Their goodness is so active, and their thoughts given with so much honesty! I love to hear them prattle of their miniature hopes and fears, before deceit has taught them mystery or concealment. Do you remember, the first day you ventured to your dressing-room, you ordered

Edward to be brought in? I was well long before, and had seen him frequently; but some weeks had elapsed since he had been permitted audience of his mother. Sister, you took him in your arms—kissed his fair brow a thousand times, and wept salt yet sweet tears of joy; they were brighter to my eyes than the gay jewels of your coronet: for they were nature's tears."

"Perhaps they were tears of Pride, shed at my own sad change."

"I'll not believe it!—he, too, had suffered the disease, but 'scaped without a blemish. Ah, good my sister! you wept for joy—to see his brow unstained."

"I did!—I did!"

"I knew you did. I took him to his chamber; and, after a grave pause, he looked into my face, and, clasping his tiny hands, exclaimed, 'I am so happy that mamma has grown ugly: shall I tell you why, dear aunt?—It has taught her to be kind—she never kissed me so before. Shall I pray to-night that she may continue always ugly?'—Trust me, dear sister, Ned was the true philosopher: he knew that people, though they may be admired for beauty, are never loved for it."

"My poor boy!" said the lady, after a painful pause—"My poor, dear boy—he is a noble child! and I may thank *you* for it, Annette: I trusted him to menials; you saved him from contamination."

"I am not yet *come out*," retorted Miss Feversham, with her own peculiar archness of manner; "when I am I shall have other employments, I dare say, like other young ladies."

"Annette, do not trifle now. My child *might* think those seams of little consequence; but my husband!—then those women—those beauties whom I have so long eclipsed!"

"Ah, there it is! I will not believe it is on Leslie's account you sorrow—he is but one of the many! If I have wronged you by my frankness," she continued, seeing the cloud again gathering on her sister's brow, "study but the arts he loves, and on my knees I'll crave a pardon—and never—never—never any more offend. He loves a country life—he loves simplicity——"

"He ought to have married you."

"Perhaps he would had I been old enough. My glorious sister! if you look so upon me, I'll never jest again. I know not why I jest—a jest is a play on truth—and truth I have ever worshipped. With reverence I speak; it is the earthly type of all things heavenly. God is truth—his word is truth—faith and truth are one—truth should be treasured in our hearts, yet dwell upon our lips, still flying, still remaining—brighten

our eyes—shed a pure lustre over our features, a lustre that can make beautiful the plainest face. A noble thing is truth!”

“Annette, there’s a new spirit created or roused within you.”

“Lady, it is not new; love may burn faintly for a time, but it can be quickly fanned by circumstances to a flame. I loved my sister; and when I looked into her mind I saw but one blot there—’twas vanity. I feel that I am touching a dangerous theme, with much too free a hand; but you have called me friend—that is a title dearer far than sister. I’ve heard you say men were capricious, and would feed on loveliness, like bees, taking honey, returning stings—that they would rove from flower to flower, seeking the sweetest: but Leslie is not one of these. We look upon the plainness of the thing we love till it grows into beauty.”

“He could not look on me, Annette,” replied Lady Leslie, “without drawing comparisons—what I was, and what I am.”

“My dear sister, let me tell you one more short story, and I have done.

“In an eastern country, no matter whether in Persia or Turkey, but somewhere in the East, there was a spring—a limpid spring, whose waters were like crystal; and upon the margin thereof the nymphs and good spirits used to congregate, and return thanks to Allah for having placed so delightful a fountain by the way-side. The holy men who, journeying from country to country, drank of its refreshing waters, declared that it came directly from the centre of the world, and brought to its surface the virtues and medicaments that before were concealed in the bowels of the earth. The fame of the well spread far and near; and one of the rulers in that country said:—

“Behold! we will build around our spring—the spring wherewith Allah has blessed our land—a safeguard and a wall; and the wall shall be of alabaster, within and without—so that all who pass by shall marvel at the purity of the well. And we will set one to keep the well, and watch over it; and the name of her who watches and guards the well shall be called TRUTH.’

“And all the wise in that country who heard the words of the venerable ruler declared that they were good. And the ruler stroked his beard, which descended below his girdle. And the ruler said—‘Let the thing be done forthwith.’

“But in that land there were more rulers than one: and another opened his mouth and spake. ‘The brain in the gray head is dry,’ said the youthful ruler; ‘and his eye dim, so that he cannot discern the fashions that spread over the earth; his

ear is closed against the voice of improvement. Behold! we will tell him a thing! Why should our well, the spring of delight in our wilderness, be closed in alabaster, and one of such exceeding plainness as Truth set to guard its waters? Behold! we will plant a glorious tree beside the well; and its roots shall descend into the earth, and its branches ascend to the first heaven. And the tree shall bear the fruit of gems and jewels, which will sparkle in the sun, and o'ershadow our spring with splendour.' And the young and the foolish shouted the shout of joy. And the shouts of the young, and the shouts of the foolish, were louder than the shouts of the wise. So the young ruler curled his moustache, till its hairs saluted those of his soft hazel eyes, and said, 'The thing shall be done forthwith.'

"And the thing was done—the voice of the foolish prevailed for a time over the voice of the wise.

"'Where is the goodness of the well, and where the purity of the water?' exclaimed those who once had praised its marvel and its beauty; 'behold! the roots of the filthy tree have disturbed its clearness.'

"'My spring—my spring—my limpid spring!' wailed the voice of the last spirit that had lingered by its side, and could now no longer remain near its margin. 'Birds of no wisdom nest in the branches of the false tree, and the untrue gems have become cankered—and thy waters are corrupt. O that thou hadst been walled with alabaster, and guarded by Truth!'

"And, as the spirit passed sighingly away from the well, the spring itself replied: 'The sun shines, and the gems sparkle on me—what do I desire more?'

"And a great spirit heard the words; and the great spirit said that the words were foolish. And the great spirit resolved that he would uproot the unclean tree, and after a time restore the well.

"And the tree, which was named 'EXTERNAL BEAUTY,' became uprooted, at the command of the great spirit. And the waters of the spring were troubled, and mourned after the tree, and after the gay birds that filled its ear with foolishness.

"But the great spirit said, 'Let be—the well, in a little time, will regain its purity, now that the glare of external beauty is removed from its sight, and the roots of vanity from its heart; it can now drink into its depths the mysteries of heaven, and the light of Allah, and be satisfied with the wall of alabaster as a guard. O that so fine a well should have ever become corrupt!'

“My dear sister,” persisted the fabulist, seeing that Lady Leslie was not displeased at her invention, “you are the well, and Leslie the wall of alabaster, and I am Truth, and your beauty was the tree; think less of the tree, and more of your husband and child; and, Annette Feversham’s word upon it, he will love you better than ever. I will not tell you,” she continued, with more tact than those unacquainted with the windings, the knowledge, and the mysteries of woman’s heart, would have given her credit for—“I will not remind you that your figure is as perfect as ever—your eyes as brilliant—your teeth as white—your smile as gracious; and, as for those little pits,—they are graves for vanity! Write to your husband, sister—tell him—”

Lady Leslie started from her seat—and, after a moment’s listening, exclaimed—“It is his horse’s tramp; I know the sound of its hoofs among a thousand. Oh, that I could hide this face from him and from the world!” She seized a veil which lay upon the sofa, and would have flung it over her head. But Annette drew up her slight figure with a gesture and a dignity that bore a miniature resemblance to her sister—and, taking the rich lace from the trembling and agitated hands of the lady, said, with both feeling and emphasis:—

“There is but one thing that should make a woman veil before her husband, and that is—shame. The house of Feversham knows it not!”

Lady Leslie could hardly help smiling at the tone of authority assumed by the little Annette; but she yielded, nevertheless, and forgot, at the time, in her husband’s warm and affectionate greeting, the mortification which, for so many weeks, had steeped her proud soul in bitterness.

* * * * *

It is again evening—though five years have passed since the commencement of our tale—and on the lawn of Leslie Abbey, the lord and his noble lady are enjoying the prospect and the breeze of their native hills. The moat has been partly filled, and instead of weeds and wildness have sprung up goodly shrubs and smiling flowers. Here a vista has been carefully opened in the wood, and we may see the beautiful river wandering like animated silver beneath the smiles of the rising moon, until it is again swallowed in the darkness of the deep, deep forest.

Hark! the voice of joyous children from a neighbouring village—the shout—the laugh—the gay halloo—dancing amid the echoes of the hills; and we can perceive the spire of the village church—the church that they, the lord and his *once* proud

wife, have built and benefited; the country upon which they look is theirs—the silver river—the dark wood—the waving corn;—what else?—the hearts and blessings of their tenantry!

The Lady Leslie, after many struggles, followed the advice of her young and simple sister: she became literally a crown of glory to her husband, and was crowned in return by his perfect love.

“Where tarries our sister?” he enquired, after they had surveyed their wide domain, and heard the blackbird’s last whistle, and watched the fog-wreath encircle the wood, and cast its mantle over the valley.

“She is with our children. O, Leslie! we both owe much to that girl, who blends so astonishingly the wisdom of the serpent with the gentleness of the dove and the frolic of the wild kid. I shall never forget the first lesson she read me on the advantage of personal plainness.”

“Personal plainness! what has it to do with you?”

“Peace, peace, dear Leslie! Do not again awaken the vanquished spirit of pride within your wife’s bosom; I sometimes fear it only sleeps; yet have I learned to bless ‘lost beauty.’ My trial has been turned into a triumph.”

“Let it sleep on, then,” replied the husband, of whose character Annette had rightly judged. “A British woman has something to be far more proud of than personal beauty.”

THE MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER.

The Trials of Margaret Sunderland.

“If Misfortune comes, she brings along
The bravest virtues. And so many great
Illustrious spirit have conversed with woe,
Have in her school been taught, as are enough
To consecrate distress.”

THOMSON.

“HUSH, Margaret, I see it again! Poor little thing, how it limps! Hush! I declare it has gone through the hedge into the church-yard. Wait one, only one moment, dear sister, and I shall certainly catch it;”—and over the church-yard stile bounded Rose Sunderland, as lightly as a sun-beam, or, I should rather say, to be in keeping with the time and place, as lightly as a moon-beam; for that favourite orb of love and ladies had risen, even while the golden hue of an autumnal sun lingered

in the sky, and its pale, uncertain beams, silvered the early dew-drops, which the gay and thoughtless girl shook from their verdant beds in her rapid movements. But Rose cared little about disturbing dew-drops, or, indeed any thing else that interfered with the pursuit which occupied her for the moment. With the eagerness of sixteen she had pursued a young wounded leveret among the silent tombs, as thoughtlessly as if she trod only on the sweet wild thyme, or humble daisy; and when she had nearly wearied out the object of her anxiety, she saw it take shelter under the worn arch of an ancient monument with evident satisfaction, convinced that now she could secure her prize if Margaret would only come to her assistance.

"Sister, sister," repeated she eagerly, "come; if we do not take it, it will surely become the prey of some weazel or cub-fox before morning."

Margaret slowly passed the stile.

"One would think you were pacing to a funeral," said Rose, pettishly. "If you will do nothing else, stand there at least, and—now I have it!" exclaimed she joyously: "its little heart pants—poor thing! I wonder how it got injured!"

"Stop," replied her sister, in a low, agitated voice: "you forget—yet how can you forget?—who it is that rests here; who—." She placed her hand upon a plain stone pedestal, but strong and increasing emotion prevented her finishing the sentence.

"My dear Margaret, forgive me! it is ever thus. I am fated to be your misery. I am sure I never thought—."

"Think now, then, Rose, if it be but for a moment: think—think, that only one little year has passed since he was with us; since his voice, so wise, and yet so sweet, was the music of our cottage! his kindness, the oil and honey of our existence. Though the arrow had entered into his soul, it festered not, for no corruption was there. When he was reviled, he reviled not again; and though his heart was broken his last words were, 'Lord, thy will, not mine, be done!' My dear, dear father," she continued, sinking at the same moment upon her knees, and clasping her hands in devout agony, "teach me to be like thee!"

"Say *me*, rather," ejaculated the sobbing Rose, whose grief became as vivid as her exultation had been: "say, teach Rose to be like thee! you are like our father; but I am nothing!—any thing! Oh, Margaret, can you forgive me? There; I'll let the hare go this moment; I'll do any thing you wish: indeed I will."

"Do let it go," replied Margaret Sunderland, who had quickly recovered her self-possession; "it would be ill-done to permit any suffering near his grave."

After a brief pause, she rose from her knees, and passing her arm through that of her sister, left the church-yard to its moon-light solitude.

The Widow Sunderland dwelt on the banks of the Witham, and the path the sisters had taken led for some time along the picturesque meadows that sloped to the very water's edge. As they pursued their way, an opening amid the trees discovered the beautiful window in Lincoln cathedral—at once the pride and boast of that venerable city; the beams of the moon were full upon it, and its varied panes glittered like many-tinted silver in the placid yet wavering light. "How beautiful!" exclaimed Rose. Margaret sighed. "Is it not beautiful?" interrogated the gay-hearted girl. "Yes, Rose; but methinks I more admire these lofty towers, standing out against the clear night sky; and looking, not like relics, but giants of the olden days. We have no right to upbraid Time in this instance; for he,

——— 'gentlest among the thralls
Of Destiny, upon whose wounds hath laid
His lenient touches, soft as light that falls,
From the wan moon, upon the towers and walls,
Light deepening the profoundest sleep of shade.'

Time and man have loved those glorious towers; and I love them better than the moon-tinted window; for see, Rose, a cloud has veiled her brightness, and—and now my towers are as prominent as ever, while your window is obscured."

"You would draw a moral from that, my wise sister."

"It would be quaint; and, I fear," replied Margaret, "an old song to, perhaps, not a new tune; signifying, that much which is excellent and beautiful is lost, because not having the advantage of a good light."

"Sister, I forgot to tell you that I met Lady Louisa Calcraft this morning at the library, and she took no notice of me. I am sure she knew me, for she said something to a gentleman who was with her, and I distinguished the words, 'dead father,' and 'ruined fortunes.'"

"The ban is upon you, and upon us all, Rose," replied Margaret, turning her pale but beautiful countenance towards her sister—"The ban—

——— 'Of buried hopes,
And prospects faded.'

Would to God that we were all—! that any sacrifice on my part could pay the debts my poor father, in his honest, but wild speculations, incurred; and then I could return the haughty stare of those who worshipped, it appears, not us, but our prosperity, and now scorn the daughters of a ruined house. The Calcrafts in Lincoln!—but they are everywhere. I could ill have borne a scornful look from one of them.”

“ They are friends of Ernest Heathwood—are they not?”

A deep and glowing crimson, which luckily the obscurity of the night preserved from observation, mantled the cheeks of Margaret Sunderland, while she replied—

“ Yes, I believe so; but, dear Rose, you might have spared me the mention of his name.”

“ You will be more angry with me when you know that this morning I also saw Ernest, and he requested—prevailed on me to—”

“ To what?”

“ To take a letter to you.”

Again the tell-tale blood rushed to the maiden's face, and as quickly receded, leaving her fine features pale and rigid as chiselled alabaster. It was long ere she recovered herself sufficiently to form any determination, much less arrange her words for utterance; but the only manifestation of displeasure she evinced towards her thoughtless sister, was by withdrawing her arm, and walking resolutely forward, unaided and alone.

Enough has been doubtless gathered from this conversation to show that Margaret and Rose were the daughters of a ruined merchant—of one, indeed, who had been a prince yesterday, and a beggar to-day—of one whose argosies had gone forth, but returned no more—whose name one year would have guaranteed millions—yet who died the next, wanting a shilling. Maurice Sunderland had cheerfully surrendered all to his creditors, yet that all was insufficient to satisfy the claims made, and justly made, upon him. House, plate, jewels, servants, had all been sacrificed. Not a vestige of their former prosperity lingered; and they who had revelled in superfluities, now wanted the most common necessities of life. A small jointure alone remained; and in that his wife had only a life-interest. Margaret was many years older than her sister; and in his agony, their father wished that the grave had closed over them, as it had over his other children, before this great sorrow had come upon them.

His wife was vain, weak, selfish; a woman who knew not what it was to grow old gracefully, and who haunted youth—

ful pleasures with a wrinkled brow, a flaxen wig, and a painted cheek. Her mind was inconceivably small; she wept more for the loss of her diamonds and Dresden than for her husband's misfortunes; and mourned incessantly that her Mino, her darling, her exquisite poodle, was of necessity deprived of his chicken panado! Being a man of no ordinary intellectual powers, Mr. Sunderland had chosen her—no one knew why!—from the love of contrast, perhaps; or the then, as well as now, prevailing opinion, that silly women make the most tender wives; or perhaps, smitten with her pretty face—time out of mind the matrimonial bait for wise men as well as fools? But certainly no one could give her credit for being the mother of such a being as Margaret Sunderland. One little anecdote will serve to show the nature of Margaret's principles—and it is to be hoped, act as a lesson to many similarly circumstanced, who seem not aware that honesty demands the sacrifice of *all*; so that, in the emphatic words of Scripture, we may “owe no man any thing, but to love one another.” When her father was making out an inventory of her personal property for the benefit of his creditors, Margaret entered the room with a noiseless step, and placed before him a large casket, containing all the jewels she possessed. The old man laid down the pen, and looked into her sweet face, without a word.

“These were only valuable, dear father, because you gave them, and loved to see me wear such finery;—in our future dwelling they would be worse than useless,—take them, and let them, for my sake, be appropriated to the payment of our debts.”

“Not so, my child; you have nothing to do with—”

She prevented the sentence being finished by an affectionate kiss.

“I will not suffer you to say so, because it makes me as if not one with you. If you do not take them I will sell them myself, and send the money where it may be required.”

Mr. Sunderland unclosed a portion of the casket, and his eyes rested on a tiara of the finest oriental pearl. “I remember when you last wore this, my child; it was at the gallant fête given at Hampstead, by the rich Jew of Cheapside. How beautiful it looked in your dark hair.”

“And does not this look as beautiful, father?” exclaimed Margaret, snatching a white rose from an overturned vase of flowers, and placing it on her head. “When we live in a nice country cottage, you shall gather one for me every summer morning.”

“But the winter—the winter will come there, girl, as well as here, and where then shall I gather roses?”

“We will then, father, live upon memory—and upon hope!” She hardly dared trust herself to pronounce that little word *hope*, which, to a really broken heart, sounds more like mockery than consolation. Her father looked mournfully into her face, and shook his head in bitter silence; he then re-closed the casket, and would have placed it in her hands.

“They are the only portion left you, Margaret.”

“Not so, father; they would take a portion from me.”

“How, child?”

“An honest conscience! I cannot keep them; they were bought with your money for the daughter of the rich—they would not, dearest father, become the daughter of a poor man. All I ask is, permission to imitate your example—You give up all: O! suffer me to do the same, and do not suppose so meanly of your own girl, as that she valued these more than that self-approbation, whose silent voice is sweeter than the applause of courts or kings.”

Maurice Sunderland was neither a harsh man nor a stern father; he had loved and admired his daughter, but he had never known her till that moment. He made no reply to her words, but folded her silently to his breast; and she felt tears—the first she had ever known him shed—falling upon her brow.

These misfortunes may be considered the commencement of Margaret's trials. The family removed to Lincoln, as one or two relatives lived there, who could forward the plans Miss Sunderland had formed for their support. Her affection for her father would not permit her to leave him to the care of a giddy, childish sister, and her almost idiotic mother; particularly as his health was visibly sinking, and nature appeared unable to repair the inroads of disease. She, therefore, accepted most joyfully the charge of the education of four little girls, her cousins, who were to remain with her only during the day, as their parents resided in the good city of Lincoln. Her father raised no obstacle to this plan; though his withered cheek flushed, and his hand trembled, the first day that he saw his beautiful Margaret quietly arranging, and superintending her *élèves* in the back parlour of their cottage, which she had converted into a school-room; but her mother's caprice and spirit of contradiction was a constant source of mortification, although it tended still more to draw forth her daughter's virtues: she was never satisfied; always regretting their past splendour—always reproaching poor Margaret with

having degraded her family, by condescending to become a "school-mistress;" and yet thoughtlessly squandering her hard earnings on selfish enjoyments. This was not all;—no one who has only *read* of "The delightful task of teaching the young idea how to shoot," can form any estimate of the self-denial which must be the portion of an instructress, particularly if she be conscientious in the discharge of her duty. All influences, to be useful, must be exercised with discretion; and it is but one little step from dominion to tyranny. Margaret was, therefore, obliged to practise as well as preach; and, indeed, one without the other is always unavailing; she had to watch, not only herself but others, so that her maxims might be really useful to those she sought to improve. She wished to make them not only accomplished, but informed; and her "new system," as it was called, was subject to many animadversions, both from her relatives and their friends; who, as usual on such occasions, quite forgot what Miss Sunderland *had been*, in what she was; treated her merely as "the governess," and admitted her only as such to their houses.

Of all those doomed by the wavering scale of fortune to earn their own bread, none are so much to be felt for as governesses. The servant, when her work is done, has an hour or two that she can call her own, and she has no ambition beyond her sphere. But the governess has no sphere—she is considered—part of the kitchen—part of the drawing-room;—from the latter she is often expelled, and from the former she turns with disgust. She struggles between a double existence; she is a sort of amphibious creation, belonging to two separate states. She must appear like a gentlewoman, while she hardly receives the wages of a lady's maid; she must be "accomplished and refined," yet keep her accomplishments out of the way till called for; and support insult, as if she were devoid of feeling. Heaven help those who are obliged to go a "governessing," for they can expect but little help from earth!—Volumes might be filled by "The Trials" of "a Governess."

At one of those visits, which she continually shrunk from, and only endured as an occasional penance, she met the very Ernest Heathwood, to whom Rose so unwittingly alluded during their evening walk. The eldest son of a baronet, who, with his new honours, had changed, it was understood, a mercantile for a somewhat aristocratic name, was a likely person to attract the attention, and win the civilities, of all within his circle; and he was welcomed to the mansion of one of Miss Sunderland's relatives with extraordinary courtesy. Margaret, always collected, always dignified, sought neither to

attract nor avoid his attentions; but silently suffered all the little manœuvres of second-rate, country-town society, to take their course. The anxiety that some mothers evinced to crowd a tribe of ill-dressed daughters to a tuneless piano, and there show off their skill in the various departments of first, second, and third harmony; while others contented themselves with exhibiting the more quiet, and, consequently, more endurable litter, of card drawings and Poonah painting, could only excite a feeling of pity in such a mind as Margaret's. Pity, that woman should so thoroughly mistake the end and aim of her creation, as to descend to be the mistress of a puppet-show—and herself enact first puppet; and something more severe than pity towards the other sex, who outwardly encourage, while they inwardly despise such petty traps of slavery. “An age,” reflected Margaret, “which values itself on caricature, parody, or burlesque, can produce little that is sublime, either in genius or virtue; yet those qualities, and the display of imperfect, and, in nine cases out of ten, more senseless accomplishments, amuse: and we live in an age that must be *amused*, though our best and noblest feelings pay the penalty;” and she employed her slender fingers with ten-fold care, to build up the card-castle, which her little pupil, Cicely, had thrown down.

“It is abominable,” whispered her sister, who that evening had accompanied her, “to hear such bad music, while *you* could give us so much that is good.” A quiet motion of her sister's finger to her lips prevented further observation; and the card-castle bid fair to mount three stories high, when, suddenly, Ernest Heathwood turned round, and, addressing himself to the fair architect, asked if now she would favour them, for he was sure she could. “O, yes,” observed one of the dowagers; “of course, Miss Sunderland *can* and *will*; she *teaches* so well, that she must be a proficient.” Some feeling of pride, perhaps, (for it will linger, despite our better judgment,) called so exquisite a blush to Margaret's cheek, and young Heathwood gazed on her with such respectful, yet visible admiration, that, were she not “only a governess,” the entire female sex, likely to be married, or given in marriage, would have thrown up the game as hopeless; but the eldest son of a rich baronet would never think of the daughter of a broken merchant—and a governess! the thing was impossible—quite.

What Ernest Heathwood did think while Margaret commenced that sweet ballad of Moore's, “All that's bright must fade,” it is impossible to say; but a thrill, amounting to anguish, was felt by every one in the room, by the peculiar manner in

which she pronounced the following lines, as if they were the pure echo, the true feeling of the sweet Indian melody:—

“ Who would seek or prize
Delights that end in aching ?
Who would trust to ties
That every hour are breaking ? ”

Then it was that Ernest Heathwood saw into her very soul, and felt that she must indeed have known change and misfortune.

Music is dangerous from lips of beauty, but more dangerous from those of feeling: the union of both was too much for Ernest's philosophy; and he was, it must be confessed, somewhat bewildered during the remainder of the evening. She inspired him not only with interest, but admiration; and he felt more anxiety than he cared to express, when her history was truly, though, it appeared to him, coldly communicated by her relative, the next day, with the additional intelligence, that her father had been seized only that morning with paralysis, and that little hopes were entertained of his recovery! He called constantly at the cottage; but it was not until sometime after the bereavement, which Margaret, above all, lamented, that he saw again the being for whom he had more interest than ever.

There are peculiar circumstances which train our susceptibilities to receive impressions, and misfortune either softens or hardens the heart: the incapacity of her mother, the volatility of her sister, rendered them both unfit companions for the high-minded Margaret; and she might well be pardoned for anticipating the evening that now invariably brought Ernest to the cottage, as the time when, free from toil and restraint, she would meet the sympathy and tenderness, without which a woman's heart must be sad and unsatisfied. She was not, like many other wise and prudent people, at all aware of the danger of her position. She had no idea, that while seeking to alleviate or dispel sorrow, by what she termed friendly converse, a deep and lasting feeling was silently, but surely, implanting itself in her bosom, and that time and opportunity were fostering it, either for her happiness or misery. Her girlhood had passed without any of what we call the frippery of love. How she had escaped the contagion of flirtation, is wonderful! Perhaps it might be attributed to a certain reserve of manner, which served as a beacon to fools and puppies, to warn them off whenever it was their fortune to encounter Margaret Sunderland.

Among the wealthy citizens many had sought her hand; but she was not to be courted by a golden shower; and after her father's failure, none remembered the beautiful daughter of the unfortunate merchant: it was, therefore, not to be wondered at, that she valued him who valued her for herself, and herself only—and dreamed the dream that can be dreamed but once.

Many evenings were spent in that full and perfect trustfulness, which pure and virtuous hearts alone experience. So certain indeed appeared the prospect of her happiness, that she sometimes doubted its reality; and when a doubt as to the future did arise, it pressed so heavily, so very heavily upon her heart, that, with a gasping eagerness which excited her own astonishment, she cast it from her, as a burden too much for her to bear.

She had known and loved Ernest for some months, when one morning their only servant interrupted her little school, by saying, that a gentleman in the parlour wished to speak to her. On entering the room, a short, dark, elderly man returned her graceful salutation, with an uncouth effort at ease and self-possession.

“Miss Sunderland, I presume.”

She bowed; a long pause succeeded, which neither seemed willing to interrupt; and when Margaret raised her eyes to his, there was something—she could hardly tell what—that made her think him the bearer of evil tidings. Yet was the countenance not unpleasing to look upon—the expanded and somewhat elevated brow—the round full eye, that had rather a benign than stern expression, would have betokened a kind, and even gentle being, had not the lower portion of the face boded heaviness and severity—the mouth was thin and compressed—the chin lean and short—the nose looked as if nature had at first intended to mould it according to the most approved of Grecian features, but suddenly changing her plan, left it snubbed and stunted at the end—a rude piece of unfinished workmanship.

“Madam,” he at last commenced; “you are, I believe, acquainted with my son.”

“Sir!”

“My son, Mr. Ernest Heathwood?”

Again Margaret replied by bowing.

“I have resided many years abroad, but if your father was living he would know me well.”

The word “father” was ever a talisman to poor Margaret, and she looked into his face, as if imploring him to state how

he had known her parent. He evidently did not understand the appeal; and continued, in a constrained manner, his lips compressed, so as scarcely to permit egress to his words, and his eyes bent on the carpet, unwilling to meet her now fixed and anxious gaze.

“I have every respect for you, Miss Sunderland; and yet I feel it but right to mention in time, that an union between you and my son, is what I never could—never will agree to. The title” (and the new baronet drew up his little person with much dignity) “I cannot prevent his having, but a shilling of my money goes not with it, unless he marries with my perfect consent. Forgive me, young lady, I esteem your character; I—I—;” he raised his eyes, and the death-like hue of Margaret’s features seemed, for the first time, to give him the idea that he spoke to a being endowed with feeling.

“Miss Sunderland, I was not prepared for this. I had hoped matters had not gone so far. I—then you really love Ernest?”

“Whatever my sentiments, Sir, may be towards your son,” she replied—all the proud woman roused within her—“I would never entail beggary on him.”

“Well spoken, faith; and I am sure, Miss Sunderland, that had you—in short, you must be aware this is a very delicate subject; but had you fortune equal to my hopes for Ernest, I would prefer you—upon my word I would—though I never saw you till this moment, to any woman in England. You see,” he persisted, assuming the tone of low-bred confidence; “I have, as a mercantile man, had many losses; perhaps you know that?” He paused for a reply, which Margaret could not give. “These losses must be repaired, and there is only one way to do so. If I had not the station to support which I have, it would not signify; but as a man of title, the truth is, I require, and must have, ten or twenty thousand pounds within a very little time—there is but one way to obtain it—you would not—” (and here the man of wealth, and the man of rank, forgot himself in the husband and the father) “you would not, I am sure, by persisting in this love affair, entail ruin upon me and mine. Ernest has two sisters and a mother, Miss Sunderland.”

Margaret’s breath came short and quick, the room reeled round, and, as she endeavoured to move to open the window, she must have fallen, but for the support which Sir Thomas Heathwood afforded her.

“I will never bring ruin on any one,” she said at last.—
“What is it you require of me?”

"To write and reject, fully and entirely, my son's addresses, and never, never see him more."

"This, Sir, I cannot; I will see him once more, for the last time, this evening. I will practise no deceit, but I will tell him what is necessary. There, Sir, you have my word, and may the Almighty ever preserve you and yours from the bitterness of poverty!"

Well might the old Baronet dread the effects of another interview between Margaret and his son, when he himself experienced such a sensation of awe and love towards this self-denying girl; yet such was the holy truth of her resolve, that he had not the power to dispute it. He left the cottage, after various awkward attempts to give utterance to his contending feelings.

"Margaret!" screamed her mother, as she was passing to her own room; "do, Margaret, just come here and see how well—how young I look without my widow's cap—a conceit of my own, this trimming—when you are married to Ernest, I shall dress in white. I should like to know what sort of a man his father is, and if he is likely to live long or die soon: dear Margaret," added the poor woman, in all the pure vulgarity of mind, "I should so like to hear a child of mine called 'my lady!'" This was too much for her poor daughter, who rushed into her little chamber, and burying her face in her hands, yielded to emotions which, for a time, were too powerful to submit to the control of reason.

The evening of that eventful day was clear and balmy; the flowers of early spring disseminated their fragrance over every little weed and blade of grass, till they were all impregnated with a most sweet odour: the few insects which the April sun calls into existence, clung wearily to the young tendrils for support, and the oak-leaves of the past autumn still rustled beneath the tread of the creeping hedge-hog or swift-footed hare. It was a tranquil hour, and Margaret Sunderland repined at its tranquillity. "I could have better parted from him in storm and tempest, than amid such a scene as this," she said, as she leaned against a gnarled trunk of a withered beech-tree for support. The next moment Ernest was at her side.

"And thus, to please the avarice of my father, Margaret, you cast me off for ever—you turn me adrift—you consent to my union with another, though you have often said, that the union, unhallowed by affection, was indeed unholy.—Is this consistent?"

"I come not here to reason, but to part from you; to say, Ernest Heathwood, what I never said before; that so true is

my affection for you, that I will kneel to my Maker, and fervently and earnestly implore Him to bless you, to bless your bride, to multiply happiness and prosperity to your house, and to increase exceedingly your riches and good name."

"Riches!" repeated her lover (like all lovers) contemptuously; "with you I should not need them."

"But your family; you can save them from the misery of poverty—from the plague spot, that marks, and blights, and curses, all whom it approaches. I should have mentioned," she added, with unwonted asperity, "that it rested upon us, and not have suffered you to be contaminated by its influence."

Many were the words he used, and the reasons he urged, to shake what he called her mad resolve. He appealed to her affections, but they were too strongly enlisted on the side of duty to heed his arguments; and after some reproaches on the score of caprice and inconsistency, which she bore with more patience than women so circumstanced generally possess, he left her under feelings of strong excitement and displeasure. He had not given himself time to consider the sacrifice she made; he felt as if she deserted him from a feeling of overstrained pride; and bitterly hinted, (though he knew it to be untrue at the time,) that it might be she had suddenly formed some other attachment. When she found herself indeed alone, in the dim twilight, at their old trysting spot—though while he was present she had repelled the last charge with true womanly contempt—she would fain have recalled him to reiterate her blessing, and assure him, that though her resolve was unchangeable, she loved him with a pure and unsullied faith. Had he turned on his path, he would have seen her waving him back; and the tears that deluged her pale cheeks, would have told him but too truly of the suppressed agony she had endured.

Many weeks elapsed, and she had outwardly recovered her tranquillity, though she was but ill-fitted to go through her daily labours as before, when Rose so unexpectedly announced that she had seen Ernest, and taken a letter from him. When the sisters entered the little cottage, it was evident that something was necessary to dispel Mrs. Sunderland's ill temper.

"Yes, it's a pretty little thing; what loves of eyes it has, and such nice long ears! But really, Margaret, you must not go out and leave me at home without a sixpence: there was no silver in your purse, and the post-boy came here, and refused to leave a London letter without the money;—it is astonishing how impudent those fellows are—and so—"

Margaret interrupted her mother, by saying that she left ten or twelve shillings in her purse.

“Ay—very true—so you did; but a woman called with such an assortment of sweet collars, and it is so seldom I have an opportunity now of treating myself to any little bit of dress, that I used them; it was so cheap, only eleven and sixpence, with so lovely a border of double-hem stitch, and the corners worked in the most delicate bunches of fusia—here it is.”

“And did the letter really go back, Mother?”

“I wish you would not call me *Mother*; it is so vulgar! every one says *Mamma*, even married women. No, it did not go back; I sent Mary into the little grocer’s to borrow half-a-crown. You need not get so red, child: I said you were out—had my purse—and would repay it to-morrow morning.”

Degradation on degradation, thought poor Margaret, as she took the letter:—“I cannot repay it to-morrow; that was the last silver in the house;—I know not where to get a shilling till next week.”

“I must say, Margaret, for a young woman, you are the least communicative person I ever met; you have got that letter by heart by this time, I should imagine: pray, who is it from?”

Margaret Sunderland seemed perfectly unconscious of the question, but continued the re-perusal of her epistle, as if her mother had not spoken; she then left the room without uttering a single word.

“I must say, Rose, that your sister gives me a great deal of uneasiness,” said Mrs. Sunderland; “she is so unlike me in all things—so self-willed—so like your poor father, who, indeed, always made her his companion. She wants tenderness and—”

“Oh! my dear Mamma!” exclaimed the generous thoughtless Rose, “you cannot think *that*, I am sure. If you only knew what a sacrifice she made to-night to catch you that little hare;—and, as to her purse, I know that the reason she changed colour was, that it contained all the money in the house.”

“Then she ought to manage better; I never used to be without money in London; it is very odd—” and so ran on this inconsiderate lady, until the heart of her youngest-born ached within her, from perfect weariness, and shame at her selfishness.

“Rose,” said Margaret, as the former entered their bedroom, “come hither: you may, perhaps, see Ernest Heathwood again, and you can then return him this;”—she placed the unopened letter in her hand;—“I do not wish to read it, particularly now; it might have a baneful effect upon the honest purpose which, I trust in God, I shall have strength to ac-

compleish. And now, dearest, sit here, and look over this other letter I have received from London."

Rose took the paper that Margaret offered, and moved from opposite the cracked looking-glass which garnished the simple dressing-table.

"I'll stand here, please, sister; I cannot bear to sit opposite that disagreeable trumpery glass; it makes my nose crooked. Oh! Maggy, do you remember the beautiful mirrors we had in Bedford Square, and my pretty little bed, with its pale pink silk curtains looped with roses? Heigho! I did not know what a patched quilt meant then;" and she glanced contemptuously at the clean but humble coverlet of their simple couch.

"My dear Rose, do be serious, and read."

"What an ungenteel-looking letter!—such coarse paper, and such a scribbely-scrabbely hand!" Whatever the hand or paper might be, after she had fairly commenced, she did not again speak until she had finished the perusal from beginning to end, and then, with one loud cry of joy, she threw herself into her sister's arms.

"Margaret, dear Margaret—to think of your taking this so quietly, when I—my dear sister, I shall certainly lose my senses. We shall be rich, more rich than ever; and you can marry Ernest—dear, kind Ernest—and we can live in London, and keep our carriage, and—Nay, sister do let me break that odious glass. O, Margaret, I am so happy! let us go tell our mother—*mamma*—I beg her pardon; and you shall give up your pupils:—dear, beautiful letter! let me read it again;" and the second perusal threw her into greater raptures than the first.

"It is better *not* to mention this to our mother, I think," said Margaret, when her sister's ecstasies had in some degree subsided. "And yet she is our parent, and has therefore a right to our confidence, though I know she will endeavour to thwart my resolves."

"Thwart your resolves?" replied Rose, in astonishment; "why, what resolves can you have, except to marry Ernest, and be as happy as the day is long?"

"I shall never marry Ernest Heathwood," replied her sister, in a trembling voice, "though I certainly shall be more happy than I ever anticipated in this world."

"I cannot pretend to understand you," said Rose; "but do let me go and make *mamma* acquainted with our unlooked-for prosperity;" and she accordingly explained to her mother, that a brother of her father's, one who had ever been on de-

cidedly bad terms with all his relatives, and *their* family more particularly, died lately in Calcutta, bequeathing by will his property, amounting to many thousands, to his eldest niece, Margaret Sunderland, who, in the words of his singular testament, "had never offended him by word or deed, and must ever be considered a credit to her sex." There is no necessity to recapitulate the ecstasies, plans, and arrangements that succeeded, and in which Margaret took no part.

The next morning she granted her pupils a holiday, and when her mother went out, doubtless for the purpose of propagating the account of their good fortune, Margaret told her sister that she wished to be alone for some time to arrange her plans. She had been so occupied for about two hours, when Rose Sunderland, accompanied by a gentleman, passed the beechen-tree where Margaret and her lover had last met.

"I am sure she will not be angry—it will be an agreeable surprise—and mamma won't be home for a long time yet," said Rose; "I will open the parlour door, and—"

"There I shall find her forming plans for future happiness, in which, perhaps, I am not included," interrupted Ernest Heathwood.

"You are unjust, Sir," replied Rose, as they entered the cottage; and in another instant Margaret, with a flushed cheek and a burning brow, had returned the salutation of him she loved. There was more coldness in her manner than he deemed necessary, and, with the impetuosity of a high and ardent spirit, he asked her if she attributed his visit to interested motives.

"No," she replied, "not so; I hold myself incapable of such feelings, and why should I attribute them to you? I tell you now, as I told you when last we met, that my constant prayer is, that God might exceedingly bless you and yours, and save you from poverty, which, in the world's eye, is the extremity of sin."

"But, Margaret," interrupted Rose, as was her wont, "there is no fear of poverty now; and Sir Thomas himself said, that, with even a moderate fortune, he should prefer you to other women."

"I have not even a moderate fortune," replied the noble-minded girl, rising from her seat, and at the same time laying her hand on a pile of account-books that she had been examining. "You, Mr. Heathwood, will understand me, if I say that, when I first breathed the air of existence, I became a partaker of my family's fortunes, as they might be, for good or evil."

“And you shared in both, Margaret, and supported both with dignity,” said Ernest, eagerly.

“I believe you think so, and I thank you,” she replied, while the flush of gratified feeling passed over her fine features. “And now, bear with me for a little, while I explain my future intentions. My poor father’s unfortunate failure worked misery for many who trusted in him with a confidence which he deserved, and yet betrayed. I meant not that,” she added, hastily, “he did not betray;—but the waves, the winds, and the misfortunes or ill-principles of others, conspired against him, and he fell, overwhelmed with his own and others’ ruin. Lips that before had blessed, now cursed *him* they had so fatally trusted, and every curse seemed to accumulate sufferings which only I was witness to. To the very uttermost—even the ring from his finger—he gave cheerfully to his creditors; there was no reserve on his part—all, all was sacrificed. Yet, like the daughters of the horseleech, the cry was still, ‘Give! give!’ and,” she added, with trembling voice, “at last he did give—even his existence! and I who knew so well the honour of his noble nature, at the very time when his cold corpse lingered in the house,—because I lacked the means of decent burial,—was doomed to receive letters, and hear complaints of his injustice. In the silent hour of night I knelt by his coffin; decay had been merciful; it spared his features to the last; and I could count and kiss the furrows which disappointment, and the scorning of a selfish world, had graven on his brow:—but, O! how perfectly did I feel, in that melancholy hour, that his spirit was indeed departed, and that my lips rested on nought but cold and senseless clay; yet I clung, with almost childish infatuation, to the dwelling it had so sweetly inhabited for such a length of years. The hours rolled on, and the gray mists of morning found me in the same spot; it was then, as the light mingled with, and overcame the departing darkness, that I entered into a compact with the living spirit of my dead father, that, as long as I possessed power to think or act, I would entirely devote my energies to the fulfilment of those engagements, which his necessities compelled him to leave unsatisfied. I am ashamed to say, I nearly forgot my promise; and though a portion of my hard earnings were regularly devoted to the darling prospect of winning back for my father his unspotted reputation, yet I did form plans of happiness in which his memory had no share. Ernest, for this I have suffered, and must suffer more. I have gone over these books, and find that, after devoting the entire of the many, many thousands now my own to the cherished object, only a few hundreds may re-

main at my disposal. This is enough—again I say, may you be happy with your dowered bride, and remember that the one consolation—the only one that can support me under this separation is—that I have done my duty.”

Strange as it may seem, young Heathwood did not appear as much distressed at this resolution as Rose—or, to say the truth, as Margaret—thought he would have been. No matter how heroic, how disinterested the feeling which compels a woman to resign her lover; she naturally expects that the lover will evince a proper quantity of despair at the circumstance: and certainly, Ernest, after a pause of a few minutes, during which time he seemed more affected by Margaret's noble-mindedness than his own bereavement, entered cordially into her views, and praised the sacrifice (if, with her feelings, so it might be called) with an energy that left no room to doubt its sincerity.

After his departure she pondered these things in her heart, and came to the conclusion, that she had resigned her affections too soon, for that it was evident he had pretty well succeeded in banishing her from his love; and poor Rose, who had in so little time been twice disappointed in her hopes both of a fortune and a wedding, was reproved with some asperity for conducting Ernest Heathwood, under any circumstances, to their cottage. It is needless to add, that her mother's tears and remonstrances had no effect upon Margaret's purpose; and her lawyer received instructions to remit forthwith to all the creditors of the late Maurice Sunderland the full amount of all their demands, with the interest due thereon from the day of his failure!

It required all her firmness to bear up against her mother's complainings; and, above all, against the painful truth established in her mind, that Ernest had ceased to regard her with any thing bordering on affection. Strange, that at the very moment we are endeavouring to repress the unavailing passion of the one we love, we secretly—unknowingly, it may be—hope for its continuance! Not that Margaret would have ever swerved from her noble purpose; but she could not support the idea, that she was no longer thought of. And *he* had left her too, without the sort of farewell she felt she had deserved.

All “business affairs” were arranged according to her desire; but she was fast sinking under the outward tranquillity which, under such circumstances, is more fatal than exertion. Listlessly she wandered amidst the flowers which Rose loved to cultivate, when the unusual sound of carriage-wheels roused her attention, and, with no ordinary emotion, she saw Sir

Thomas and Ernest Heathwood enter the wicket gate, and take the path leading to the cottage.

"I told you, Miss Sunderland," commenced the old gentleman, with more agitation, but less embarrassment, than he had shown at their former interview, "that I had need of twenty thousand pounds to support my credit, and save my family from distress. I told you, that I wished my son to marry a lady possessed of that sum, and I now come to claim you as his bride,"

"Sir!"

"Yes, Madam: I was your father's largest creditor; and though I had no fraud, nothing dishonourable to allege against him, yet I did not, I confess it, like the idea of my son's being united to his daughter. He was always speculative and imaginative, and I feared that you might be the same. The sum you have so nobly repaid me, I looked upon as lost, and you must therefore suffer me to consider it a marriage-portion; it has saved me from ruin, without the sacrifice of my son's happiness."

"How is this?" exclaimed Margaret, fearful of trusting the evidence of her own senses; "I cannot understand—the name—"

"Our original name was Simmons," exclaimed Ernest, eagerly; "but knowing all the circumstances—I never told you—I knew how my father would feel at your disinterested conduct; and now that your trials are past, you will, I trust, no longer doubt me."

"Who said I doubted?" enquired Margaret.

"Even the pretty Rose; and here she comes to answer for her apostacy."

"Nay, dearest sister," exclaimed the laughing girl, "it was only last evening that I saw Ernest, and I have kept out of your way ever since, lest I should discover my own secret. Without my frivolity, and the thoughtlessness of another, who, for all that, is dear to us both, Margaret's virtues would never have shone with so dazzling yet steady a light."

"True, Rose, spoken like an angel; I never thought you wise before; it is to be hoped that when your sister changes her name, her mantle may descend upon you," said Ernest.

"I think she had better share it with you; and I only hope that Margaret— She may want it for herself," she continued, archly, "who knows but the most bitter trials of Margaret Sunderland may come after marriage?"

Ernest did not reply to the unjust suspicion, for he had not heard it: his sense, his thought, his heart, were fixed only

upon her who had thrown so bright and cheering a lustre over that truth, usually so dark, even in its grandeur :—"The good things that belong to prosperity are to be wished, but the good things that belong to adversity are to be admired."

THE CURSE OF PROPERTY.

The Trials of Alice Lee.

"Give me neither poverty nor riches."

POOR BARRY !" exclaimed Mr. Newton. "Poor Barry ! it was melancholy to see that once fine property melted away, one could hardly tell how, until even the noble dwelling of his ancestors was sold in lots to a fellow who printed 'Architect' on his card."

"I was his uncle's friend," sighed old Sir Charles Stanley ; "and the recollection of that family—it is strange, but it is nevertheless true—the recollection of the fate of the different members of that family affords me at once the most exquisite pain and pleasure. I mourn over the love of display, and the pauperising system, pursued by poor but proud relations, through which that fine estate was utterly ruined ; and I mourn over it the more, because it is far from being a singular instance of ruin, effected by the same means. You, my dear friend, will readily believe that the pleasurable reminiscences I experience arise from the noble conduct of that little black-eyed girl, Alice Lee, whom all the family, with the exception of Claudius, the heir at law, strove to injure ; and whom they even now grudge the fair name and the fair fame she has acquired by her own industry and exertions."

"I should like to hear you tell the tale, Sir Charles," replied Mr. Newton. "I have often heard sketches of the history ; but the loss of property, owing to mismanagement, is unfortunately so common in our poor country, that many similar events may have confused my memory with reference to this particular one."

"My old friend Charles Barry," commenced the venerable baronet, "had the misfortune to inherit, with his estate, the charge of some five or six half-brothers and sisters, who married, and had a greater number of 'blessings,' in the form of children, than usually falls to the lot even of Irish gentry. The

being he at that time loved most in the world, was his own sister, a young woman nothing differing from other girls of her age and rank, and who, in due time, married two thousand a year (it was called) and a fox-hunting 'Squire. Mr. Barry's health had for some months been on the decline, and he resolved to visit Bath, then esteemed the most fashionable and health-giving place on earth.

"A little scene which occurred at Barrybrooke the evening before this departure, will best illustrate the *ménage* of an Irish bachelor's house in the year eighty-two.—I was staying with him at the time, and we had agreed to travel together. I must, however, tell you, that he had determined upon not letting any of his numerous relatives, who came for 'sea air' to Barrybrooke, with the intention of remaining, some for three, others for nine, and others again for twelve months, know any thing of his movements. In the evening he summoned Jerry Keg—valet by inheritance—and whom I always remember the same stiff, upright, honest looking fellow, with a grave air, a twinkling eye, and a twisted nose—into his study. Jerry entered, his high shoulders propping his ears, his head projecting like that of a tortoise, his hands folded behind his back, his old-fashioned, richly laced livery sticking out on either side like the fins of a flat-fish.

"Jerry," said his master, 'I wish my valise filled with rather a better supply of things than I require when I visit my sister; I wish Black Nell saddled, and as you accompany me, you must take Padreen, I suppose. Have all things ready by six o'clock to-morrow morning, and tell Meg we shall not return for a month.'

"'It's all clane impossibility, y'er Honor,' replied Jerry, bowing; 'Black Nell, I heard the groom say, wanted shoes, and I made an oath never to cross Padreen since he flung me into the apple-tree, over the fence. As to the valise, Sir, honey! Mrs. Mooney's little Jack cried for it to make a cart for Bran; indeed, it 'ud surprise y'er Honor to see the 'cuteness of that child—how he settled it car-fashion behind the dog's tail, and made the natest little harness ye ever see, out o' one of the new traces o' y'er Honor's gig.'

"'And how dare you, Sir,' said my friend, incensed at this new proof of his not being master in his own house, 'how dare you suffer Mrs. Mooney, or any body else, to destroy my property in that way?'

"'Sure, she's y'er Honor's half-sister, and I hope I know manners too well to contradict a lady; much less one of y'er Honor's blood relations.'

“ ‘ Well, pack the things in a trunk, and we can all go in the carriage.’

“ ‘ O, boo-boo-boo !—the carriage, is it ? Sure, y’er Honor’s own second cousin, Mr. Flinnerty, sint that off yesterday, to bring his nurse and the twins here, and his wife along vid ’em, to give ye an agreeable surprise, as he said, seeing y’er Honor’s so fond o’ children ; and it’s my own opinion, that sorra a thrunk in the house ’ud hould thegether ; the’ve been all let to drop to pieces, because it’s so long since they’ve been wanting.’

“ ‘ What am I to do, Stanley ?’ said my friend, looking at me despairingly.

“ ‘ Simply thus,’ I replied ; ‘ let us leave our servants to follow, put a few things into my portmanteau—for I promise you, the outward man will need refitting when we arrive at our destination—and I will ride Dorton’s horse.’

“ ‘ This was agreed upon, to Jerry’s mortification, who muttered, ‘ He could ride the mule any way, tho’ it was a stubborn devil, and it was no thing for a gintleman of family and fortune, like *his* master, to lave his own place without an *attendant*.’

“ ‘ What do you mean to do with the horde, at present in possession of the house ?’ I enquired, laughing : I always tried to laugh him out of his faults, for, like most of his countrymen, he was more proof against *reason* than *ridicule*.

“ ‘ What *can* I do with them ?’ he replied ; ‘ they are my own kith and kin ; and as I am the head of the family, and a bachelor—poor creatures !—ay, it is easy for you to laugh—you English folk know nothing, and care less, about long-tailed families ; with you, the junior members of a family, both males and females, contribute to their own support ; with us—’

“ ‘ The senior,’ I said, ‘ is expected to provide for all, and is soon rendered, by that means, incapable of providing for himself. In the name of goodness, my dear fellow, if you must play almoner to such a tribe, do it in a rational way ;—pay them so much a year—say ten, twenty, or thirty pounds each—but I defy any income to stand the constant drains to which yours is exposed ;—men, women, and children—dogs, horses, and servants—make an eternal inn of your house. My life on’t ! you never know, from one year’s end to another, how many eat at your board.’

“ ‘ Meg does—and she is a faithful old creature.’

“ ‘ True ; but she has so long been accustomed to this Castle-Rackrent system, that it is for you to commence the reform—you cannot expect *her* to do it.’

“ ‘Faith Charles, you are right,’ he replied; ‘but you cannot enter into my feelings. To tell you the simple truth, I could not afford to pay half the people I support ten pounds a year.’

“ ‘Permit me to ask how much their support costs you?’

“ ‘Eh?—O! a mere trifle, I suppose: but seriously,’ (and he fixed his fine blue eyes upon me as he spoke,) ‘you do not suppose me capable of the meanness of calculating what people eat and drink?’

“ ‘I would only wish you capable of the wisdom of considering whether, in justice to others, you can literally *give* more than you possess.’

“ ‘Justice! what do you mean?’

“ ‘Forgive me, my dear Barry, but have you paid off any of the embarrassments which hung over the estate when you came of age?’

“ ‘I cannot say I have.’

“ ‘If you have not paid off the principal, I trust the interest has been punctually discharged.’

“ ‘I cannot say that it has. I am never pressed for it; and somehow or other, the rents slip through my fingers before I have time to think of my debts.’

“ ‘Of course you investigate the accounts of your agent and steward regularly?’

“ ‘Strange beings you Englishmen are! My agent’s a glorious fellow—exact as a dial, punctual as a dun. O, no! no necessity in the world to look after him; and as to my steward, faith! he’s a clever fellow—so ingenious! cannot write much, but has a way of his own of keeping accounts—particular sorts of crosses he makes—amazingly curious, I assure you.’

“ I smiled and sighed. Jerry knocked at the door.

“ ‘I want to spake to ye’r Honor.’

“ ‘Speak out, then, at once.’

“ ‘It’s Mr. Maberly, the grazier, called about the three fat bullocks he sold ye’r Honor last Christmas, to kill for the poor; and if it ’ud be convanient, jist to let him have the money, now.’

“ ‘Tell him it is *not* convenient, and send him to Dennis; why should he pester me about his dead bullocks? I thought he was paid long ago; there, leave the room.’

“ ‘The widdy Rooney is below, on account that her son is kilt intirely, and as good as dead, by the Spilloque boys; and she thought, maybe, ye’d help her in her throuble.’

“ ‘Poor thing! there, give her that,’ tossing a guinea on the

table; 'tell her, I'll commit her son if he gets into any of these broils again.'

" 'God bless you, Sir! I'll tell him not to brile agen—if he can help it.'

" 'What, is he below?'

" 'As much as is left of him ye'r Honor;' and away went Jerry. The just creditor, therefore, was dismissed without even an apology—the rioting youth, with a reward! I noted this, and more!—I urged his remaining even for a day or two longer, for the purpose of arranging his accounts. It was useless; he laughed me off, and promised, that on his return he would—'see about it.' Alas! how many of the bright and shining lights of this poor country have been extinguished by PROCRASTINATION.

" His easy manners, his good-nature, and really handsome person, made him an universal favourite at Bath, and many a lady of large fortune would readily have bestowed upon him hand and heart; but Charles was no fortune-hunter—he considered the lust of gold

'The last corruption of degenerate man,'

and fixed his affections upon a young and beautiful widow lady with one daughter, whom he had accidentally met at the house of a mutual friend. Although his passion was violent, I saw good reason why it should be lasting. United to feminine loveliness, she possessed the rare endowments of judgment and gentleness; there was a steadiness, a sobriety about her, which made Barry often say, in the words of the poet,

'I have a heart for her that's kind,
A lip for her that smiles;
But if her mind be like the wind,
I'd rather foot it twenty miles.'

" 'She is so uniform,' he would add, 'that I almost think her too good for me, who am so volatile; yet I love her for the contrast the more.'

" It is exceedingly difficult to throw off the trammels that have grown with our growth; and when he was accepted by this interesting woman, he positively wanted courage to write and inform his sister of his intended marriage.

" 'Poor thing,' said he to me, one morning, 'she will so grieve at my being married; for she has even now instilled into the mind of her only son, Claudius, who is about six years of age, that he is to be sole heir to my property.'

" 'If,' I replied, 'she has been absurd enough to act in that

way, she deserves punishment. In addition to supporting the cousin-clan, is it usual for the head of a family to remain in a state of single blessedness to please his relations?"

"He smiled; but not until after they were united, did he communicate his attachment to his sister. He went further; —he wrote to old Megg, to say, that grieved as he might feel, it was necessary that no visitors should remain at Barry-brooke, as Mrs. Barry disliked company. So far, so good; would that he had persevered in a course so decided!

"I could not repeat, if I would, the innumerable mortifications which Mrs. Barry experienced on her visiting Ireland for the first time. The manners and habits of the people ill accorded with her English feelings. From being the admired and beloved of a circle of intellectual and accomplished persons, she found herself shut up in a castellated, dilapidated house, with bare-footed housemaids (I write of what *was* forty years since) and other servants, to whom the English language was totally unknown. Every thing, from the kitchens to the attics of the rambling building, wanted arrangement; and she was bewildered where first to commence the reformation. Out of two-and-twenty servants, to discharge ten appeared the most likely mode of getting any thing done properly; and this step immediately made her unpopular with the peasantry. Then she blundered dreadfully as to the management of her parties, —asked Orangemen and their wives to meet the priest of the parish; and placed the rector's wife, at table, above a lady who was decidedly second-cousin to the great Earl of Ormond! These offences were not to be forgiven in a neighbourhood where every circumstance formed an event, and where, if truth must be told, the women envied her beauty; —the men feared her intellect. Then the family! —how was it to be expected that they could pardon Mr. Barry for marrying, in the first place, and for not consulting them, in the second? The thing was impossible, and they acted accordingly.

"Harriet, the daughter of Mrs. Barry by her first marriage, was a proud and silent girl, but possessed of exquisite feeling. Her troubles were hard and many; but they were not of long duration; she pined, and wasted, and wept in secret; and at last, as the only way left of escaping from a place where she felt every eye glared suspiciously on her, clandestinely married, and, in less than twelve months afterwards, gave birth to a female child, and died. Mr. Barry, with the pure kindliness of spirit which always characterized his impulses, gave the little orphan into his wife's arms, and bursting into tears, exclaimed—

“ ‘ It is your grandchild,—it shall be also mine ; I will be unto it a true parent.’ ”

“ You know that my friend had not been blessed with children ; so that the feeling on his part towards the helpless innocent was natural. The person most displeased, when my little friend Alice Lee took up her abode at Barrybrooke, was Mr. Barry’s sister ; her son, Claude Barry, as he was always called (his father, by the way, two years after his birth, broke his neck in a steeple-chase,) was naturally considered heir to his uncle’s property ; and it was a sad thing, in her opinion, for a stranger to take even part of the good things she wished her son exclusively to possess. Claude himself was always a truly good-natured boy, though not very fond of reflecting.

“ ‘ I can’t think why you all hate that little child,’ he would say ; ‘ she is a merry soul, and gets my uncle out of his nervous fits sooner than any one else, with her innocent prattle ; she is quite a comfort to them both in the long winter evenings when the place is too dull for us to remain there.’ ”

“ ‘ Innocent, indeed !’ replied one of the family *coterie*, when the observation was finished. ‘ I wonder how *she* could be *innocent*, tutored as she is by her grandmother.’ ”

“ ‘ I am astonished you have not more discernment, Claude, than not to see,’ said his mother, ‘ that the little imp is brought up with mighty high notions : the very last time I was there, she cried because there was no sugar in her bread and milk.’ ”

“ ‘ It’s a comfort,’ kindly added a third, ‘ that the child is indisputably ugly ;—a little bit of a thing, notwithstanding all the cramming she gets, with a monstrous forehead towering over her eyes, making her look as if she had water on the brain.’ ”

“ ‘ She’s as proud as Lucifer,’ subscribed a fourth, ‘ and would stamp like a fury, if she hadn’t a clean frock on twice a day ;—fine English airs, indeed !’ ”

“ ‘ We may all be obliged to her yet, for all that,’ said Claude, laughing, and making the remark more from a love of tormenting, than anything else ; ‘ poor thing ! I shall be the only one among you, who never thought or said an unkind word of her !’ ”

“ ‘ And more fool you !’ and ‘ you ’ll repent it !’ and that always safe and wise saying, ‘ Time will tell !’ was echoed about, through the scandalous council, until poor Claude wished that the holidays were over, and he was fairly back at school. The following summer, many of the same party were staying at Barrybrooke ; for disagreeable as they certainly were to Mrs. Barry, she bore their society with praiseworthy forbearance :

unfortunately, some words had arisen between her and Claude's mother, on a very unimportant matter, and the lady was anxious for an opportunity of mortifying her sister-in-law. Mr. Barry was from home; but after dinner, when the dessert was placed on the table, Mrs. Barry desired the servant to send in Miss Alice, who was then about six years old. The little girl came, as usual, to her grandmamma's knee, and at the moment Claude was helping himself to some currants.

“ ‘ Give a few of those to Alice, dear,’ said Mrs. Barry.

“ ‘ Help yourself first, my darling,’ observed his mother; adding, in a bitter under tone, ‘ It is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs.’

“ ‘ True,’ replied the lady; ‘ yet the dogs do eat of the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table.’

“ Mrs. Barry rose as she spoke; and I shall never forget the dignity with which she crossed the dining-hall, to leave the apartment in which she had suffered so gross an insult:—those who felt justly (I was one of the number) followed. Alice perfectly understood what had passed; and the little thing stood where her grandmamma had sat, swelling with rage. Claude heaped the plate with currants, and called her affectionately to his side. Alice looked at him with an expression I shall never forget. At last, swallowing her passion, she shook her head, and turning to his mother, said, very quietly,—

“ ‘ I am no dog; I am, as you have often called me, a little ugly girl; but the time may come, when those who hate me now, may be glad to pick crumbs from *my* table, and thank me for them too.’

“ This spirited reply coming from one so young, drew forth many and various observations from the party. Claude was indignant at the cruelty of his parent, and followed his aunt with apologies, and even tears. This was only one incident in a thousand of the dislike evinced to this hapless child, of whose father, I should have told you, nothing had been heard for a considerable period, as he went abroad on the death of his wife. In the mean time, the circumstances of my old friend were far from improving; his habitual neglect of money matters, and his eternal procrastination, were swiftly leading to a destruction, which, as Mrs. Barry was ignorant of its extent, she could not prevent. Indeed, the very exactness with which she conducted household matters, was attributed to her as a crime.

“ ‘ Where's the use of painting palings, for the rain to batter against?’ said one;—‘ such expense, indeed!’

“ ‘ Then,’ said another, ‘ there was an enormous bill for

building two pig-sties : even if the beasts *did* get into the garden, now and then, what great matter was it ? where's the good of flowers ?”

“ ‘ Couldn't she let the tenants go on as they used,’ exclaimed a fourth, ‘ and take the spinning and duty fowls from their wives, as others did before her ? What was the time of the poor to them ? Talk of extravagance ! was n't it the height of extravagance to pay women for spinning, when it could be done for nothing ?’

“ Mrs. Barry's system, whatever might have been the prejudice entertained against her by the peasantry, as ‘ a fine lady from foreign parts, who was come to reign over them,’ was productive of so much good to the poor, that they soon regarded her as their best friend, and their gratitude and affection was the greatest consolation she possessed, for I cannot deny that increasing difficulties pressed hard upon Mr. Barry, and that he wanted resolution to tear himself away from family and party feuds. These circumstances soured his temper, and made him at times capricious and severe. It is well known, that at home or abroad, whatever goes wrong with a married man, is revenged upon his wife. Perhaps I ought not to say *revenged*, but I can hardly find a term to express the ill-temper which is too often shown at home, when adverse circumstances are encountered out of the domestic circle.

“ Your own poet has expressed in language so chaste and beautiful the peculiar feelings which this sort of thing generates, that I will repeat you the lines :—

‘ A something light as air—a look,
A word unkind or wrongly taken,—
Oh ! love, that tempests never shook,
A breath, a touch, like this, has shaken.’

“ ‘ Are they not beautiful ?’ exclaimed the old gentleman again. Not that matters were so bad with them, either ; but certainly, something was fast undermining Mrs. Barry's constitution. I would not have said that her chief happiness arose from the consolation afforded her in the affection of her tenants, had I remembered the devoted tenderness of her grandchild, and the delight she took in attending to her education. The development of the girl's mind was both rapid and powerful. Distant as they were from towns, no aid of masters could be obtained. Mrs. Barry knew enough of music to teach the child its rudiments : and Alice, gifted with a fine ear, and a genuine love for the charming science, made

swift progress in the art she loved. Many studies were resorted to, with the view of occupation, that would not have been thought of under other circumstances, or if the little maid had enjoyed the society, of those of her own age. Her grandfather taught her Latin, and the priest of the parish instructed her in Italian. Of what are usually called children's books, she never possessed any: but could repeat, almost by heart, the *Histories of Hume and Rollin*, with many of the ancient chronicles. Her light reading varied from the *Arabian Nights* to the *History of the Robber Freany*, with odd volumes of *Irish History*, and now and then a romance of the *Radcliffe school*. Shakspeare she loved; Milton she revered; but there was ONE book that was invariably perused morning and evening, which laid the foundation of her good conduct and future prosperity. Her grandmother saw that her romantic and rambling mind needed a powerful corrective. Situated as she was, and feeling that the child was debarred from amusements suited to her age and sex,—observing also the avidity with which she swallowed information, and unable, from the increasing delicacy of her health, to guide her as she wished,—she wisely felt the necessity of strengthening her religious impressions. The imagination of my young friend readily caught at the *beauties* of Scripture, but her grandmother wished her reason to be convinced of its *truths*: this she happily effected, and the silence and solitude of her sick room often echoed the pure doctrines of salvation, and the breathing prayers dictated by faithful hearts. Barry procured for his wife, at an immense expense, the best medical advice the country afforded. His affection had cooled, but never changed; and the prospect of losing one so dear, redoubled his attentions. It was, however, of no avail: and, after a tedious illness, I followed her to her grave. Alice had never left her sick bed: it was a touching sight, to see the expiring effort the pale but still beautiful woman made to place the hand of the weeping child within that of her husband: he fell on his knees, and solemnly swore to protect Alice Lee to the latest hour of his life, and to bestow upon her a handsome income at his death.

“ ‘I do not want that last promise,’ she said in a trembling voice, ‘she can make riches for herself. Protect her, but let her be independent!’

“ *Independent* was the last word this excellent woman uttered; no wonder then that it was a hallowed feeling and a hallowed sound to the heart and the ear of her grandchild.

“ ‘I WILL be independent,’ said the sweet girl, as she strew-

ed the flowers in which her grandmother had delighted, over the silent corpse, and placed to her cheek the blooming roses which she had so loved to cultivate; and then she laid her own head on the same pillow, and read in the Book of Life, of eternity, and heaven, and worlds beyond the grave—and was comforted in her affliction!

“She had watched from her chamber window the slowly pacing funeral pass from the court-yard, the coffin supported by eight of the oldest tenants, who claimed the privilege of carrying it to its resting-place, and Claude Barry, in right of kin and as the representative of his uncle, (who was too ill to perform the melancholy duty,) following as chief-mourner. She had seen the procession, attended by a multitude of people, wind round the hill side, till it was concealed from her view by a dense wood that overshadowed the road, and drying her tears she entered the dark room where her grandfather was nurturing in secret the bitterness of grief. She seated herself quietly by his side, and made a sign of silence to old Jerry, who had followed her into the apartment, and whose infirmities prevented his attending the funeral: surprised that he motioned her towards the window which looked out upon the avenue, she opened the shutter so as to peep forth and ascertain his meaning. The old porter at the second gate was engaged in evidently a fierce contention with some four or five men, who demanded free passage to the house. Poor Alice trembled all over, for she had heard of writs and executions, as calamities threatened against her grandfather; but as he had ‘managed to keep them off,’ (alas! for such management,) she never thought they would really arrive at Barrybrooke. The appearance of the men, the agitation of the servant, and above all their suddenly pushing past the porter, while Jerry exclaimed so loud as to startle his master: ‘I’ll bar the doors,’ confirmed her in the feeling, that they were sheriff’s officers. And she flung herself on her protector’s neck, exclaiming, ‘What shall we do!’

“Poor Barry looked for a moment on the men as they wheeled round the house to approach the door. ‘I see who they are,’ he said in a quiet voice; ‘alas! and was not my heart sufficiently broken? and have I already lived to see the time when I return thanks to the Almighty for having taken from me the wife of my bosom—so that she has been spared this misery?’

“He walked to the hall, where his faithful servant, in the true spirit of Irish fidelity, had drawn the bolts, and established himself with a rusty musket, that had done the rooks

and magpies much mischief, on his shoulder, resolved to protect the dwelling from 'bailiff or sheriff.'

" 'Open the door, Jerry,' said my friend.

" 'What, ye'r Honor?'

" 'Open the door.'

" 'For what, plaze ye'r Honor, 'ud I do that same?'

" 'To admit these men.'

" 'Lord bless ye'r Honor, and keep ye in ye'r right mind, which ye' are not in at this present time, or ye'd niver give way to the like o' them.'

" 'Fool,' exclaimed Mr. Barry as they thundered at the portal, 'do as I command you,'

" 'Master, darlint!' replied the poor fellow, 'you may trample on me if ye' like, and call me what ye' plaze; but I'll niver be the means of letting shame into the house, in the shape o' the law,—only the boys are all at the funeral, it's long till they'd suffer such serpents to walk the country.—Well, since ye'r determined on it, do it yerself, Sir. I niver opened the door to a limb of the law, nor I niver will.'

" Jeremiah flung down his musket, and hastily left the hall, while Alice clung closely to her grandfather's arm.

" 'Come in, gentlemen, come in,' said he, with a frightful calmness of manner; 'here I am, you see;—be seated, and tell your business.'

" The business was soon told; a writ against his person at the suit of Benjamin Maberly, *Esquire*, for cattle furnished during a period of sixteen or eighteen years—a sort of running account, with now and then a nominal settlement; bills bearing interest, and sundry other expenses;—this claim alone amounted to the enormous sum of two thousand pounds; for my poor friend had often taken it into his head to stock farms, and speculate in sheep, pigs, and oxen—speculations that always terminated badly, from his unfortunate habit of never attending to his own business, but leaving it to others to manage for him. Another of these men of law had an execution against his goods and effects, for the sum of three thousand pounds, he having bestowed upon a favourite cousin a bond for fifteen hundred pounds, upon his commencing 'professional man;' the interest of this, of course, was never paid nor demanded, but on his refusing to lend the young hopeful some two or three hundred pounds, which he thought proper to require, he placed the affair in an attorney's hands, who urged immediate proceedings on the bond, the interest of which had amounted to a sum equal to the principal. Mr. Barry was very unfit to think or act; but Alice prevailed on the officer

who made the arrest, to wait until the arrival of his friends; the other proceeded calmly to take an inventory of the furniture; while the master of the mansion seemed perfectly torpid. Claude and myself returned with three or four others from the melancholy funeral to the house of mourning. As to poor Claude, he had all the family taste for expenditure, and the property he inherited from his father was mortgaged to its full value. This did not prevent his living in style; he had a good stud, fine dogs, and a machine to drive in, that almost broke one's neck to look at; he had given a ball on his coming of age, which cost almost as much as the fee-simple of his estate was really worth; and his mother, with her usual wisdom, observed that it was of little consequence, considering her son's expectations.

“ Claude, therefore, could do little—except join me in bail, which was entered into immediately, and securities given for the payment of the other demand; in less than an hour after our return, Jerry had the inexpressible satisfaction of banging the hall door after ‘the *sarpints*,’ and of drinking (a ceremony, by the way, the poor fellow never omitted) ‘Destruction to the law,’ in a bumper of pure whisky. I remained at Barrybrooke, and endeavoured to unravel the difficulties with which my friend was encompassed. I confess they far exceeded what I anticipated. To enter into details would be useless. Suffice it to say, that on his marriage, to pacify his relations, he had granted annuities, which had never been regularly paid, and then had given security on his property for the various sums that went on accumulating, he knew not how; then none of the old incumbrances had been paid off; and the fine domain, which could have supported the establishment if properly farmed, was positively nothing more than a common for the neighbours’ horses, cows, sheep, pigs, and poultry to revel on. Mrs. Barry had retrenched most considerably the household expenses; but as my friend, Alice Lee, said, ‘grand-mamma was never suffered to know grandpapa’s affairs; and what she saved, even from her own personal comforts, was expended out of doors.’ Claude’s difficulties were quite as perplexing. The advice I gave to both parties was as follows;—Mr. Barry to sell off as much property as would discharge all pressing demands, (for when one creditor comes down on an estate, the rest are sure to follow,) to let Barrybrooke, and go abroad for five or six years, live on a small allowance, and thus perfectly clear what was spared. Claude we recommended to marry a rich widow, who was known to look favourably on him, and pay off his debts with her

fortune providing an annuity for her from his estate.

“‘Cousin Claude,’ said Alice, quietly, ‘take *my* advice: they say you have fine oratorical talents, go to the bar, and make a fortune for yourself.’ It may be easily imagined, that the advice given was not relished by either. Barry’s pride revolted at the idea of selling a single acre; and Claude did not like the widow, because he had chosen to fall in love with a girl without either character or fortune. Some accommodation was made with the creditors, and my friend resolved to go abroad. A noble lord offered to take the house, and reside there: but no!—again family pride was up in arms:—and although the certainty that Barrybrooke could not be kept in even decent order under an immense expense was dwelt upon by his true friends, he disdained to let it; decided that three old servants should remain to take care of it, and as quickly as possible bade adieu to the halls of his ancestors, leaving the property at nurse for his creditors, and reserving only an income of three hundred a year for himself. All his relatives objected strongly to his being accompanied only by Alice Lee.—‘She’ll be sure to come round him,’ they exclaimed one and all, ‘and if only sixpen’oth of property is left, it’s only just that right should have it.’ It was all in vain: Barry took a proud, cold leave of his ‘dear relations’ and ‘particular friends:’ his spirit had been bitterly wounded by his late misfortunes; but it was not by any means subdued.

“‘Jerry,’ said he, as the poor fellow held open the carriage door, ‘see that the widow Murphy has the milk as usual, and the children at the school their clothing at Christmas; the agent will attend to it.’ (I must tell you that I had used every exertion to prevail on him to appoint a new agent, but in vain,)—and Barry was trying to conquer his emotion, when Alice, her face swollen with weeping, sprang into the carriage. The only living thing she possessed—a pet lamb, attempted to follow her, and looked up bleating in her face. ‘Keep it, Jerry,’ she said, ‘it is all I have to give you, and I give it you as a remembrance.’

“‘The carriage drove on: at the gate, a concourse of tenantry, and the poor whom he had so often relieved, awaited him. They stopped the carriage: some of the men, who had grown gray on the estate, came forward. ‘We have lived and flourished under ye’r Honour, and them that’s dead and gone, for many years; and ye’ve never distressed us, nor offered to do it. If ye’r Honour ’ill stay among us, and keep from foreign parts, we’ll make an advance on our rents, and pay up at onc’t to next half-year; don’t lave us to the marcy o’ strangers, and

we'll work for ye', and fight for ye', and never let a writ or a sheriff come near the house.'

"'Och! don't go to leave us,' exclaimed a poor woman, laying her thin hand on the coach window. 'Oh! don't, agra! Miss, don't let him—and the mistress, God mark her soul to glory! not *could* in her grave yet!' All this was too much for my poor friend; he could only reply, covering his face with his hands, 'God bless you all! I must go now; but I will return to you in happier times.'

"Mr. Barry proceeded to France: the idea of cheap living is connected, perhaps truly, with the Continent. An Irish gentleman is sure of a kind reception abroad; and the intelligent and cheerful manners of my friend Alice, equally free from English stiffness and French levity, increased the feeling of kindness into esteem. Barry, however, could not long remain contented in the provinces, and determined on a visit to Paris. This certainly was not wise; but Alice Lee had the happy art of extracting sweets from poison. She was introduced to some persons of literary distinction there, who discovered that her powerful and clear mind was capable of great efforts, and much usefulness. They taught her to soar, and directed her flight with judgment and kindness. Her attempts were made without even the knowledge of her grandfather, who read and approved her first production without having an idea from whose pen it proceeded;—his feelings can be better imagined than described, when he discovered that 'his little cherished child,'—the scorned, the despised one—had not only received, but merited the praise of some of the most celebrated persons in France; he was not slow in sending this intelligence over. I, indeed, heard it with far more pleasure than surprise; but it threw every member of the long-tailed family into utter consternation.' 'The thing was impossible—what! the little pug-nosed girl, who had never been to school, to be praised in the newspapers, and thought much of by learned people,—for *her* to write a book, a whole book, who had learned to hold her pen from a village schoolmaster!' Fancy, my dear Sir, all the exclamations of vulgar Irish astonishment, and even then you can hardly have an idea of the hubbub the news occasioned.—Happily for Alice, she was not one of those morbid literary ladies, who mourn at their hard fate, and pretend to sorrow because their minds are superior to their neighbours,—who sigh and sentimentalise over their being obliged to appear before the public, and yet use every justifiable and unjustifiable mode of forcing celebrity. Alice was in the purest sense of the word a Christian, and she felt the necessity of doing her duty in that

state of life to which it had pleased God to call her. She shrank not from the useful exercise of her abilities, and she had good sense enough to perceive that the odium, which at that time, even more than now, attached to literary women, proceeded from the attention they exacted, and the airs of superiority they assumed, in society. She did not neglect the cultivation of simple flowers, because she was skilled in botany; she did not cease to charm by the exercise of her fine melodious voice, because she comprehended the nature of sound; nor did she delight less in the mazes of the dance, because she understood the laws of motion. Though she became an *author*, she had not ceased to be a *woman*: her motives were noble—her actions pure; so that she neither needed, nor wore, a mask:—this was the grand secret of her popularity.

“The creditors of Mr. Barry’s estate had lately become clamorous, and declared that the sums stipulated for had not been regularly discharged. My friend found it necessary to go over to Ireland, and settle matters, the derangement of which he could not account for; even his stipend had not lately been remitted, and but for the exertions of Alice Lee, he would have suffered much pecuniary difficulty. He felt that he ought to clear himself from the imputation of connivance where evidently, on the agent’s part, mismanagement, if not dishonesty, must have been practised: he came upon the man unexpectedly, and the fellow paled and trembled before him. Conscious and confused, he fixed the next morning for the explanation of his accounts, but that very night set off for America, taking with him a very considerable sum, which he had prevailed on the tenants to advance, in addition to their rents, under the idea of ministering to their landlord’s necessities. This was a dreadful blow to my friend’s feelings: Alice had suffered much from delicate health, and he would not subject her to the fatigue of a journey; but earnestly did he long for her presence, to support and cheer him. About three weeks after he had quitted Paris on this unfortunate business, Alice Lee received the following letter, sealed with dismal black; the first page was in the handwriting of her beloved guardian and relative. She afterwards permitted me to copy it.

‘Barrybrooke, December 8, 18—.

‘MY BELOVED CHILD, — ‘I ought not to have written you so gloomy an account; it was sadly selfish of me to disturb your mind when I know how much depends on the work you are now engaged upon. You would gladly support your poor grandfather—would you not? even if he had not an acre left.

No account of that villain since he sailed from Cork. Alice, pray for me—pray that my senses may be spared. The ingratitude I meet with, is the scorpion's sting that festers in my heart. Pray for me, Alice Lee! I suppose it must come to a sale. Sell Barrybrooke! And the trees and flowers *she* planted! But I shall have one unfading flower left;—you, Alice! Poor Claude is even worse off than myself. Oh! *the curse of property*, managed as it is in this unhappy country. Would that I had been bred a common tradesman, I should then have been *independent*, and not afraid to look every man I meet in the face, lest he should ask me for money. Do you know that my sternest creditors are those of my own kin? I am sick at heart, my child, and you are not here. Do you remember the evening you left that splendid conversazione at the Count de Leonard's to come home, that you might give me the medicine with your own hand? Yet I would not have you *here* now for the world. Jerry grows young again, and Sir Charles is as kind as ever: it is too late to wish now,—but if I had taken his advice,—good night, my child. You are the only being related to me who never gave me cause for anger. Good night—God bless you! to-morrow I will finish my letter.'

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Sir Charles, as he lifted his eyes from the painful record. "When the next sun rose, his spirit had met his God:—his heart indeed was broken. The remainder was written by his old servant."—

'May it plaze ye, Miss, to put up with me to tell ye the sorrowful tidings,—that nixt morning when I wint as usual into his Honor's room, he was clane gone, and as *could* as a stone; they worried the soul out o' him, that they did; and my curse, and the curse o' the poor, 'ill rest heavy on 'em to the day o' judgment for that same. I wish ye could see how beautiful he looks this minute; jist smilin' in his coffin. So best; for he's beyant trouble now.—God be praised! they couldn't keep his sowl from glory; Poor Master Claude is like one mad, and Sir Charles is forced to order the funeral: it 'ill be the thing to do honour to the name, and a grand berrin' as ever was seen in the country; priests and ministers, and all the heart's-blood o' the gentry—and it's my intention, now that the dear master's gone, to travel into foreign parts myself, and wait upon you, Miss, who must want some one to look after ye; seeing (no offence, I hope!) that ye are all as one as my own born child: and so keep up y' er heart, and God's fresh blessin' be about ye, prays y' er humble and faithful servant (till death) to command.

' JEREMIAH KEG.'

“The funeral justified Jerry’s expectations. It was feared that an attempt would have been made to arrest the body, but the tenants came prepared for such an event; they were armed, and would have sacrificed their lives, sooner than have suffered a sheriff’s officer to lay a finger on the coffin. The scene of confusion and abuse which ensued among those, who, notwithstanding they knew the state of embarrassment the property was in, quarrelled over it, like starved jackalls over mouldering bones, is sickening to think upon. In about six weeks, the estates of the *late* Charles Barry, Esq. were advertised to be sold by the sheriff, for the benefit of the creditors of the said estates. The sorrow of sweet Alice Lee was agonizing to witness or think upon; and even now she has not ceased regretting that she did not accompany her grandfather on his *last* journey. Agitation brought on a nervous fever; and her friends in Paris, for more than a month, dreaded what its final effects might be. She recovered slowly; and one day I was sitting with her in the drawing-room, (when I found I could be of no service in Ireland, I went to see her,) when the lady she was staying with, endeavouring to divert her mind, observed, with the good-humoured playfulness of her country, that Alice’s last work had made a conquest of an old half-Indian gentleman, a Mr. Clifton, an Englishman, she believed, who wished he were young enough to make love to her.

“‘Clifton was my dear grandmother’s name,’ replied Alice; ‘and she had a brother once, but he died, I believe.’ A vague idea, which I could neither account for nor express, took possession of my mind. The next morning I waited on the old gentleman; and judge of my delight and astonishment, when I found, after much investigation, that Mr. Clifton was indeed the brother of her grandmother, who had gone abroad when his sister was too young to remember aught about him, and who had returned a wifeless and childless man: and the discovery of such a relative was a source of extraordinary happiness to him. He was a proud, stern man, very unlike the parent she had lost; yet he soon proved that he was anxious to bestow upon her what the world calls substantial proofs of his affection. Being the avowed heiress of a rich Indian merchant could add nothing to the lustre of Alice Lee, but it increased her power of doing good. The idea of Barrybrooke being sold rendered her very miserable. ‘Claude was always very kind to me,’ she said, ‘and I should like to prove that I am not ungrateful, by saving the house and domain for him.’ Her uncle, who might well be proud of her, when I mentioned this wish to him, caught with avidity at the idea of gratifying her, and

agreed to give money for the purpose, just as if he were bestowing upon her a splendid toy. He wished to visit Dublin, and we set out for that once splendid city with many and varied feelings. But I tire you,—a moment more, and my tale is ended. We were grieved, on our arrival there, to find that the sale had been hurried forward: by the desire of Alice Lee, I wrote to the sheriff, offering terms for the house, etc. of Barrybrooke. Through some precious mistake, which could not occur in any other country, my letter miscarried. We drove down to the estate, and here you must let me mention an instance of the delicacy of my favourite's mind. She positively would not travel in her uncle's carriage, but racketed the old gentleman all to pieces in an Irish post chaise.

“‘It would insult their distress,’ she said, ‘to go in splendour, when the family of my benefactor is reduced almost to want.’ The auction was going on when we drove into the town; we were ten minutes too late, the very house of Barrybrooke had been sold to the architect I spoke of! The kind and generous feelings of my young friend were thus thrown into another channel; she purchased an annuity for ‘Cousin Claude,’ and to the hour of his death he never knew from whom the income came, that enabled him to live with so much comfort during the five years he survived his uncle. She practised the revenge of a Christian: she did good to those who had spitefully used her, nor were they averse to partake of whatever *crumbs* she chose to bestow. You know the romance of her marriage, and we have often laughed at the grotesque figure Jerry exhibited at Paris;—by the way—”

Mr. Newton looked at his watch:—the kind-hearted, garrulous old gentleman took the hint, only adding, that the motto adopted by Alice, was INDEPENDENCE,—the device, a little bark passing through a stormy sea, with Hope at the helm, and the haven in view; and adding, “Thank God, all the trials of Alice Lee were endured in youth: her after-age was free from them, save and except those inherent in, and doubtless necessary to, human nature.”

THE END.

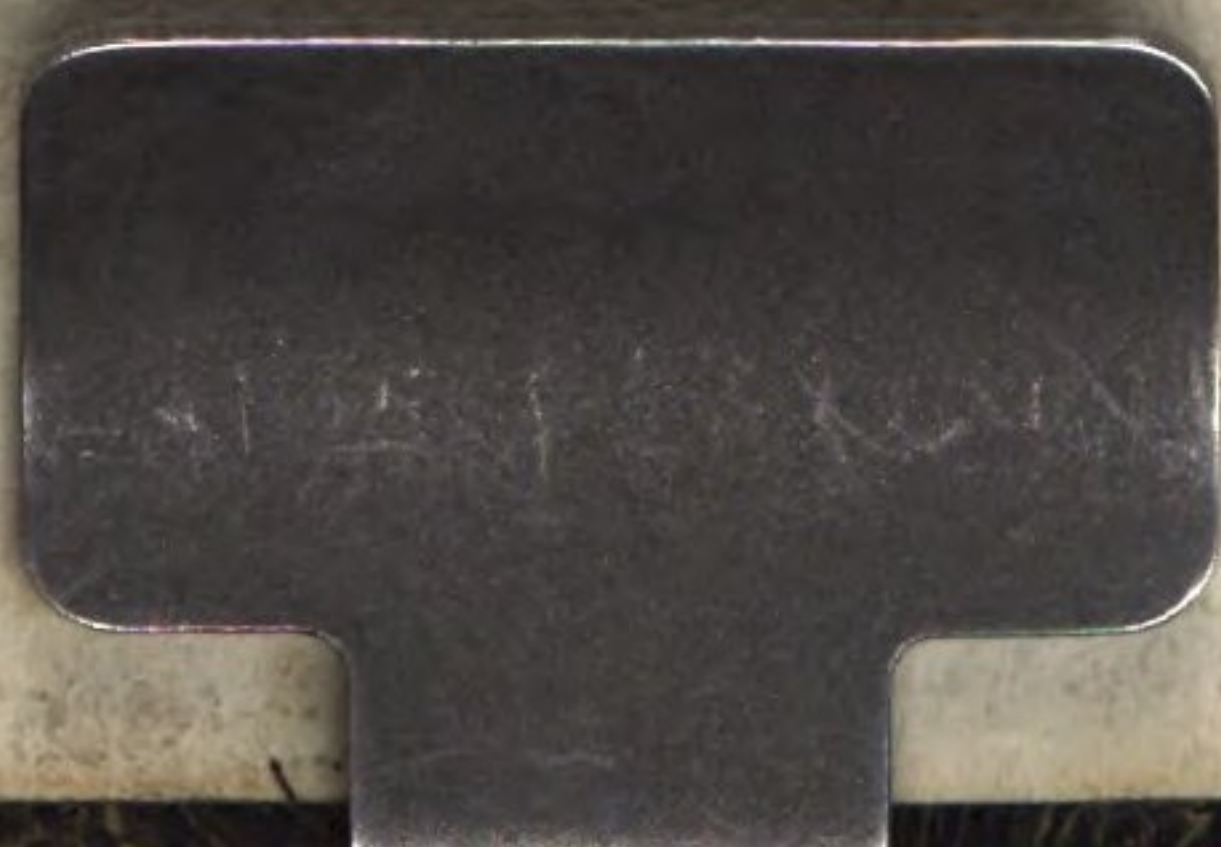
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